LOVAT DICKSON'S MAGAZINE

A MAGAZINE FOR THOUGHTFUL PEOPLE

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HENRY WILLIAMSON

Whatever has Happened?

A SHORT time ago I was standing with my friend Basil on the platform of the local station. It was built in a cutting. Rhododendrons were massed on the slope opposite. It was a delightful place, with its little goods yard, its rambler roses, and oil lamp on the wooden post. Basil glanced round and smiled his whimsical smile, preparatory to saying good-bye, and thanking me for a most enjoyable week-end. I knew what he would say—he had said the same thing after each one of his four previous visits. Basil was always punctilious and charming; his hair was always well-brushed, with exactly the right amount of brilliantine; his clothes were always neat, almost fastidious. He had been much ragged as a guardee, but had come through well; then the death of his father following a financial crash had brought him into his uncle's business—plaster of paris for ceilings and walls of new houses: there were a couple of ships, and a shortly expiring lease of a wharf somewhere on the Thames. Basil mentioned it occasionally, with a shrug of the shoulders and a slight smile. "Don't let's talk about it, it's so perfect here in Devon. May I fish the Tree Pool after tea? Or perhaps I may watch you?"

" My dear Basil, I can fish any time. But be careful of my big tame trout Peter, won't you? No, do what you like. An otter or a heron will get him if we don't. And if he goes away, he'll turn cannibal, or die of starvation, without the artificial food I throw to him every midday. Catch him if you can! *If* you can."

The porter was slamming doors. The station-master stood by. Basil held out his hand.

" Well, I wish I didn't have to go back to London, my dear Henry! It's been most awfully kind of you to have had me. It's probably an outrageous request, but may I come again, and soon? "

The whistle blew.

" As soon as you can. Well, good-bye, old chap! "

Basil jumped in. I followed him. We sat down opposite one another. There was no one else in our carriage.

" I didn't know you were coming to London."

I held out the ticket in my hand. His surprise was vaguely disturbing.

" But surely you remember we arranged at breakfast to go to town together, Basil? You said you'd take me over your wharf."

He frowned in his polite, puzzled way. Basil would never contradict or disagree with anyone. He carried the oblique method of conversation to the *n*th degree of perfection. " Of course, I'd love to take you over the wharf again, my dear fellow," he said.

" Again? What do you mean? I've never seen your wharf, Basil! You said less than half an hour ago that you had to meet a man there at three o'clock this afternoon, and when I said how the idea of living in an old Thames-side wharf had always fascinated me, you said, ' Why not come up with me and see it? ' You remember, surely? "

"Of course I remember, Henry. But——" again the whimsical look of puzzlement, "I could have sworn that conversation took place a month ago, and that you came up with me to London and I showed you over the wharf then." His voice seemed to be coming from far away. "Of course, I'd be delighted to show you the wharf, such as it is."

The train was getting under way. The trees of the Deer Park were passing on our right. Soon the tops of firs and pines were slowly sinking beside us. The cutting was dropping away; the viaduct over the valley was in front. We sat on the right of the carriage, peering through the open window for a sight of the winding stream with its fringe of alders and occasional great oaks, and of a thatched roof at the end of the valley.

The noises of wheels on rails were increasing to a thunderous hollow; we were upon the viaduct. Suddenly I remembered my motor-car: why were we not going to London in the car? It was a fast open car, and driving it was a pleasure. And where was it? Had we left it outside the "Ring of Bells" inn the night before?

"Basil, where did we leave the car? I feel very strange. We did go to the 'Ring of Bells,' didn't we? Did we get very drunk, Basil? Am I still drunk?"

Basil was staring at me strangely.

"I've been wondering that about myself. Oh, look, there's the old grey heron, just alighting by the Tree Pool! I wonder if he'll get your big trout Peter? Isn't the sun lovely on the trees?—look at the bullocks under that oak, beginning to swish their tails at the flies. Au revoir, river of bright water!" He sighed. "Why are we going to London?"

We were now in the middle of the viaduct.

"Basil, I'm worried about the car. And I can't remember walking to the station just now. Do you feel something

queer—— I say, who the devil are those two people down there by the Tree Pool? Look, one of them is fishing!"

"By Jove, yes. There's a spaniel with them too. Calmly poaching! Probably they knew you were going to London."

"If only the train would stop! Curse them! They may catch Peter."

We watched them in the distance. They were just visible beside the big hawthorn growing above the gravel ridge which floods had raised at the inner bend of the pool's tail. One of them was kneeling and casting; the other stood about half a dozen yards behind him, out of the backward flight of the cast. I felt sick with anxiety. For two years I had been feeding the big trout, climbing an alder and throwing down spoonfuls of food bought from the hatchery at Dulverton. The big trout was so tame and trusting that he would come right up in the shallows whenever he saw me approaching.

The viaduct of the Great Western Railway spanning the valley stands a hundred feet above meadowland and river, reared on tall stone columns. I had often walked across it during the years of living in the thatched house. One trespassed on railway property, of course; but that was part of its attraction. It was strange and fascinating to look down on the slender tops of spruce firs, where wild pigeons had their nests. Jackdaws nested under the sleepers, too, although they never appeared to have got used to the passing of trains.

I became aware that the train was silent, it had stopped, and Basil was opening the door. Now he had alighted. I followed him into the sunshine.

"We can go down through the trees, and then over the rushy ground without being seen until we're upon them," I said.

I moved in front of Basil, keen to get at those fellows

below. I stepped rapidly from brown sleeper to brown sleeper, impatient at their spacing, which curtailed a decent stride.

I slithered down the steep slope by the first column, and through the brambles and ash-plants growing in the rubble scree. A jump below, and I was in Farmer Coles' grazing, which was fenced with wire and posts from the Deer Park beyond. As I got under a loose strand of rusty wire I looked back for Basil, but could not see him.

The two men were still fishing the Tree Pool when I peered from behind the oak growing on the bank above the gravel bed. Their forms were familiar, but I had no curiosity about them, being wholly interested in the way the leading man was fishing the tail of the pool. He was using my method of fishing in Devon streams, the unusual method of casting upstream with a single rough hackled fly on a fine tapered gut cast. Most fly fishermen abandoned trouting when the water was low and bright; but this was the condition I liked best.

One knew how a cat felt, stalking a mouse; every cast must be precise, the fly dropping lightly, its game-cock hackles glistening with the least touch of grease applied between finger and thumb, so that it rode high and airily on the slower water between stream and eddy where the fish lay. It was tiring work, for one was taut and expectant, creeping cat-like, all one's nervous energy in the eyes and wrist.

Now I knew that the man with the rod was drying his hackled fly by pressing it on a piece of *amadou*, that brownish substance made from a marine fungus. He was sitting on the edge of the gravel, among the young plants of dock and water celery. He lifted his rod, waving the fly backwards and forwards in the air as he pulled loops of line from the reel with his left hand. The fly sailed slowly, easily, to

and fro over the water, until he had the length of line he required. I saw him tauten and the back of his head appeared to sink lower between his shoulders: he threw the fly forward with deliberate slow intentness, while the movement of arm and shoulder, following the shooting of the line from a loop he had held in reserve, was perfect in its effect of slow-motion power.

I could sense the swift glide of the tapered and enamelled silken line through the agate and bronze rings. The line fell straight and aslant the direction of the stream, the lighter gut cast following after, and last to drop was the lure of silk and steel and feather. Almost as airily as thistledown it fell, to ride well-cocked on the water. From an underwater aspect the shining reddish hackles of the fly riding down imprisoned whirls of light; the shining skin of the water was crinkled but not broken. There it was, apparently a fat and juicy mouthful for any trout. I could feel the tenseness of the fisherman as I watched it, and when a blue-grey snout arose just where the water began to quicken into the tail of the pool, and sucked in the fly, and the fisherman gave a flick with his wrist that fixed the tiny barb into the corner of the bony mouth, I experienced an identical shock and excitement.

My tame trout, the three-pounder Lock Leven I had put into the Tree Pool a year previously, which had come by train in a carrier-tank from the fishery at Dulverton with a three-pounder brown trout, was hooked at last! I wanted to run forward, to demand furiously what they were doing there, but I remained watching. I noticed Basil kneeling on the gravel bank in front, and as the fish leapt, he jumped and ran forward. The man with the rod said to him excitedly, "You take the rod. I oughtn't to have done it." To my surprise I saw Basil take the rod, just before the fish dashed over the

stickle below the pool's tail, and down the rough narrow water to the larger Viaduct Pool below. This was the trout's home, to which it had gone in its immense fear.

It fought as a hooked salmon behaves when it is red, or stale, when it has been some time in fresh water. A red salmon lacks the dash and surge of a clean-run fish. It bores, trying minute after minute to get to the bottom of the pool, there to avoid the terrible unknown enemy, usually invisible, which would drag it from the water. Gradually the unrelaxed pressure of the rod wears away its strength; it is confused, bewildered, beaten; it turns on its side, and is drawn to within reach of the gaff. . . . That was how the big trout fought the lightest of rods and gut casts: after twenty-two minutes he gave up, showed his bluish-grey length spotted black and brown, his yellow-grey belly, the slightly hooked tip of his underjaw.

Should he be put back into the river? Consider: he had been put in thirteen months previously, weighing three pounds; now he was two pounds, two ounces. The river could not feed this great stranger from the fish-hatchery; the smaller, wild brown trout, of an average weight of four ounces, got the natural food—the hatching nymphs, the fallen duns and spinners—before him. For three years in the hatchery he had been used to the twice-daily scattering of artificial food—a sort of crushed and soaked puppy-meal and dried meat fragments. For another year in the river he had been awaiting in the Viaduct Pool the same sort of food borne down in the rough stream, whereupon he would move up to the tail of the Tree Pool, and cruise around until the expected spoonfuls were cast from the familiar figure in the alder tree above him. The figure usually climbed the tree about noon every day, except when it was frosty or the river in flood.

The spring balance told his weight at two pounds, two ounces. What would happen if the unnatural food supply were stopped? He would starve to death. He was probably a cannibal already, although when feeding with the smaller wild trout, which after months of suspicion had accepted the unnatural food, he had never even threatened one. It was a Utopian life while it lasted; competition was unnecessary when the benevolent deity from the sky scattered spoonfuls of manna for them. Even the tiny fingerlings, the yearling trout and salmon-parr, hardly troubled to get out of his way, for while the daily shower lasted there was more than enough for all.

Two pounds, two ounces: nineteen inches long: he had gone back a lot in condition. As for Paul, the big brownie which had been tipped from the tank with him a year before, a heron or otter had long ago had him. There were half-pounder Loch Leven trout in the pool, but they were quick and vital enough to feed in competition with the native fish; they were in marvellous condition, deep and fat like miniature Tay salmon, and their yellow-brown spots had changed to red—proof that they were nourished by natural food.

Poor Peter, there he lay, gasping on the stones, sometimes giving a desperate flap—a fish betrayed.

But if he were put back, he might go away and, missing his food, become a cannibal, destroying hundreds of valuable yearlings——

The trout was grasped as firmly as possible across his lank and slippery middle by the left hand, while the right hand, enwound with a handkerchief as protection from the prick of teeth, forced back the big upper jaw until——

I tried to stop it; I ran to the edge of the water, crying out that he must not be killed, that the river and all it meant to my life would never be the same again if such a monstrous

thing were done. He was my pet trout! He knew me, he would take food almost from my hand, he came up whenever I appeared on the bank of the Viaduct Pool, and waited there, expectant and confident. He must have trusted *me*, because if a stranger appeared on the bank, he would remain at his resting-place under the ledge of rock at the pool's neck.

What words I shouted I don't know, but they were shouted in vain. Under the pressure the trout's neck cracked. He shuddered, and died.

I saw no more. In anguish I climbed the tree. The men were gone. A heron was standing on the sandy scour, where the visiting otters always scratched and rolled, ten yards above the neck of the Tree Pool. From my perch, where I had sat many hundreds of times before, I saw the stones of the river bed through the limpid water. I saw all the other fish I knew in their usual positions in the food-stream flowing into the pool. The sunlight made the brown and grey and blue stones, each with their clusters of caddis shell-cases, clear and beautiful. I felt all the past happiness of watching the stream return to me. And I looked round the trunk of the tree, and its shadow thrown across the shallow bed of the tail below, and there, in his position behind the mossy rock around which the faster water twirled, lay the big trout I called Peter.

He lay quite still, his paired fins resting on the gravel. His tail was set in a slight curve against the press of the current. There was a dark stain over the back of his head and shoulders. He breathed slowly, like a trout asleep. I could just discern the red of his near gill as it opened.

A hatch of fly was coming down the run. All the fish I knew were at their stations in the neck of the pool, in the stream itself swirling gently into the pool, and at the tail.

Above the neck, where the heron stood, the water ran evenly round a bend, the bed of which was made of large stones grown with water moss. The stones were too heavy to be rolled by floods, and so they made a permanent hold for the water moss, which in turn was good holding for various crawling larvæ or nymphs of the ephemeral flies. It was a hatch of the Iron Blue duns. The mature nymphs, their future wings formed and folded within their larval skins, were leaving the shelter of the moss where they had lived for the past year. What excitement as they ventured the stream, prepared to quit one element for another!

The run carried them into the pool, where the trout were waiting, the biggest fish in the best positions. I saw them, ranged alongside and behind one another, undulating their bodies and expelling water through their gill-covers as they drove forward gently against the current, thus keeping position, while balancing themselves with back, pectoral, and tail fins. The wimpling surface of the water was immediately disturbed by the rises. Those in the run were bulging rises, caused by the fish rising to take the nymphs above them—for a feeding trout looks forward and upward. Those nymphs which were not taken passed into the broader, slower stream, and reaching the top of the water, struggled to break their confining skins at the thorax. There other trout rose to take them, sending out elliptical ripples which the flow soon smoothed away.

Those nymphs which passed the suction of opening mouths broke their shucks, and standing up in them, unfolded their wings with miraculous speed, dried them instantly, and arose into the warm air as duns. I watched some seeking shelter among the leaves of the alders, where they would wait and cast their drab wing-cases and body-covers; to fly up in the late afternoon as spinners, dance their nuptial dances,

mate, drop their eggs on the water, sink exhausted into the stream again, and then—whither?

A hatch of fly, and the consequent rise of fish, was a sight I had never ceased to watch with a thrilling excitement. The river was alive, its multitudinous life in balance under the sun! My nature drew life from the living water.

While I was watching dreamily, feeling myself suspended as a spirit of water, the heron peering from its stance on the scour lifted its long neck and held up its head anxiously. Soon I heard voices from the direction of the drive under the viaduct. The bird flew up, passing within six feet of where I sat immobile on my perch of branches. It was curious to watch it folding its spindly legs straight behind its tail and tucking its neck between its shoulders. It flew past me, in its alarm failing to see me.

The voices came nearer. I recognised the man who lived in the lodge up the river, his son and wife, and Farmer Coles, the tenant of the rough grazing fields beyond the viaduct. They were dressed in their best clothes of dark material. The men wore bowler hats. I kept quite still as they approached. They were talking about the fish. They did not notice me, hidden by leaves and branches against the trunk of the alder.

"That's where it was," I heard Farmer Coles saying. "I seed'n often. Great big fish 'a was. There, behind that stone, only you can't see the stone now as the sun be shining on the water. I could'v had'n out with a rabbit wire on an ash pole if I'd a mind to, many a time, but I like a bit of sport myself, and he seemed a nice sort o' feller once you got to the right side of'n. Perhaps it would'v saved a lot of trouble if I'd yanked'n out, tho'!"

They spoke for a minute or so, and then, declaring that it was nearly noon, and if they weren't early they wouldn't

find standing room, they continued their way down the drive.

I felt that I could sit in the tree for ever watching the fish in the water. I saw Basil walking slowly on the bank by the Viaduct Pool below, and getting down from the tree, went to him. He looked rather depressed, but smiled when he saw me.

"I say, has it occurred to you that something appears to have happened?"

"Well, now that you mention it, Basil, I must say I feel, well, rather—peculiar. You know the feeling one has before one realises that one has 'flu."

"That exactly describes it. I think I'll go back to the house, if you don't mind, and rest in the shade."

We went home together, speaking occasionally, answering one another in monosyllables. The sunlight seemed harsh. Once or twice I felt a queerness in my progress, a distortion of the sense of balance. To our surprise many cars were drawn up outside the house.

"Something's happened, Basil. Keep by me. I feel damned queer."

"So do I. God, my head aches."

He swayed. His face was very white. Vaguely I noticed two policemen, standing by a six-wheeled lorry, on the body of which stood the remains of a smashed and burnt-out motor-car. I took Basil's arm, and we walked up the path by the hedge to the house.

It was packed with people. What were they doing there? It was an intolerable invasion of one's privacy, I remember complaining querulously to Basil.

Men and women, some of them strangers, were standing outside the open windows of the smoking-room. It looked like an auction. There must be some mistake. I tried to

speak to one of the men crowding round the door, all peering one way. They were pressed too close together for me to get into my doorway. I thought of my wife, of my children. Where were they?

"Basil, whatever has happened?"

He shook his head. "Anyhow, let's keep together," he whispered.

Someone was speaking inside the room. I listened. It was the voice of Jeffrey, the landlord of the "Ring of Bells." He was describing a visit to his inn. He told how two gentlemen had arrived about eight-thirty.

"The gennulmen had a master girt trout in a basket, sir. I heard tell of that fish—many had seen'n in the big pit below the viaduct. I gathered that one of the gennulmen, who had the fishin', had caught the fish, and was very sorry 'a had done so. He said it was too thin, as far as I remember."

"Yes; now tell us how much they had to drink."

"'Twas a couple of whiskies, sir. It may have been three. I can't swear to it. Maybe it was four. The gennulman seemed very upset because he had caught his pet trout, and killed it, instead of putting it back into the river. But it was no case of drunkenness, your honour. What happened afterwards was a pure accident."

"That is for the jury to decide. I want you to say only what you know, from your observation. Were the whiskies, as you call them, what are known as singles or doubles?"

"Doubles, sir. Half-quartern is the correct measurement."

"You mentioned four. Are you certain of this number? You also mentioned a couple, and also three. Evidently you are uncertain. Did they offer you any drink, by any chance?"

"Yes, sir. I had one to drink the gennulmen's health with."

"I see."

Other voices. I recognised my solicitor speaking. Then Dr. Bennison. Basil seemed to be very ill now as he clung to my arm. I felt wretchedly sick myself, with a most ghastly headache. If only I could get in out of the harsh sunshine beating on my throbbing head. I think I was beginning to lose consciousness. Very remote sounded the voices. I heard, in a series of swaying recessions, the words—blazing headlights—sixty miles an hour, or maybe seventy—a terrible noise as the car crashed into the telegraph pole at the bend of the road, breaking it in two—the car turned over and over, and burst into flames—charred almost beyond recognition.

Basil heard too. He smiled at me. We sat by the river, in the shade of the beeches near the waterfall. We did not need to speak. It was so peaceful, watching the bright stream rippling over the gravel, where the green water-buttercup waved its slender lengths, the grey wagtail flitted from stone to stone, and the dipper sang its rillets of song. The water flowed to the sea and the sky, I with it.

KARL WICKERHAUSER

Revolution in Goyaz

goyaz subst. masc.—Species of big, savoury crayfish.
Brazilian Dictionary.

And a state in the interior of Brazil is called Goyaz, too. I don't know whether the state derives its name from the shell-fish. But I know that a goyaz is big and very savoury indeed. The young boys of Goyaz State—Indians, negroes, half-castes and the scarcely less dark-skinned white—used to catch the lazy animals simply with their hands. They dive into the clear quick-flowing rivers, deep and deeper down to the bottom. The light there is fading to a sombre green. There the huge crayfish lies, half-buried in mud that is black and in gold-coloured sand.

This Goyaz is a lovely state: beautiful and quiet and lonely like paradise. Great rivers in the dusk of primeval forest, orchids and butterflies, ugly spiders and highly poisonous snakes; endless fields of sugar-cane, of coffee and maize and tobacco plantations; cattle all over the hills and plains, in tens of thousands. The fat-humps of zebu bulls swing in their heavy gait. The days are silent. They are very silent in the heat of the afternoons.

There is a faint smell of smoke. Everywhere there are wood-fires in the country. Everywhere is the low and

monotonous tune of ox-teams. The carts are singing; really, they do sing. It is the musical noise that wooden wheels and axles make as they grind over the rough roads.

. . . . . .

Revolution did not break out in the state capital. Goyaz City lies high up in the tropics. The climate there is a temptation to flawless inactivity. And the people mostly succumb. They do not even prepare ice-drinks for themselves, much less revolutionary troubles. And besides, the old church, spanish baroque, with the proud denomination of Cathedral, had a complete whitewash last spring. Rifle-bullets would only damage the new paint. So there was no idea of revolt in Cidade de Goyaz, though in the capital cities of Minas Geraes and São Paulo fighting was in full swing already.

Our revolution was to begin in the district-town, Ipamery. This place, with a railway station, brick-yards, saw-mills, a brewery and even an air-port, lies upon the tableland of South Goyaz and has a fairly good climate, but the temper of its inhabitants is rather bad. Life, there, has its full quota of uncertainties; whether the eighteen-twenty train will arrive, as usual, about midnight or, for some unknown technical reason, not at all; whether there will be any mail from Santos and Rio de Janeiro; whether—and if not, why—— Lots of irritating questions. And Ipamery, with a quite modern personality of its own, is nervous and sceptic and ever on the verge of mutiny.

They are playing bridge at Colonel Amaral's—the old soldier himself, his daughter Luiza, Fedinho the attorney (whose real passion, by the by, isn't his job, but photography) and Paulo Valdivia. It is the customary hour in the afternoon for playing bridge.

Colonel Amaral is dealer and is at the moment declaring

"One no trump." He knows he is rather weak in hearts. And he manages to ignore his lack of diamonds. One no trump—now that's not an awful bid. It's an attempt only. I'm sure this attorney fellow hasn't a single trick. It would be so very like him. A horrid fellow—with his protruding yellow teeth. Of course he has no hearts. What's more, he is a Republican! Since last December—that's almost a year now—they owe me my pension. That's a Republican government for you. Everywhere throughout the states they are in for tribulation. In Minas, Rio Grande do Sul, São Paulo, and in Espirito Santo and Pernambuco. These Republican beggars can't hold out. Still, it's a question whether the revolutionary government will pay up all arrears. This infernal wireless makes me mad. Carmen? "Luiza, please strangle that operatic howl." One can't possibly concentrate. Carmen, of course. "Thanks, Luiza darling." Now I remember the music. The tune was not bad at all. What did I declare? One no trump. No hearts. And the diamonds —well . . . "Luiza, please!"

"I said two hearts, father." He can't play No trump. I don't care much, anyhow. Sebastiao should come back from Rio to-night. I hope he'll come. These stupid goings-on. Why can't they behave like—— I wonder whether he was strictly faithful to me, in Rio? But he does love me. I'm sure he'll bring me something very nice. . . . Dearest Sebastiao! Sebastiao Fedinho dos Peixes. Luiza Fedinho dos Peixes Amaral. Lovely long name. Why didn't he cable? It's days since I heard last from him. Wires cut, says Francisco. Sebastiao doesn't resemble his brother Francisco in the least, thank heavens. There's no need to cut the wires in a revolution. Our wires are always in a horrible mess. Ten days from now we shall be married. Dear Sebastiao! In two weeks at the latest.

" Two no trumps," the attorney Fedinho said. I'm glad I got the hearts Amaral needs so badly. He would scoff at my having none. Disgusting old bully! His mean slanders against the government. Because of this ridiculous bit of a pension—and he a rich man, too. Radical of course. Nothing but lies and insults. And rebellious hopes. Well, Goyaz is no place for a revolution. People too sensible. No business of theirs. At to-day's price I wouldn't sell a single calf. I wouldn't sell if I were Sebastiao either. But he is so obstinate. He always knows better, and he'll arrive with the wrong sizes of film-packs, because he thinks he knows everything by heart and won't make a note of anything. And he didn't speak to the old miser about the dowry. So painful, so very indelicate! A paltry marriage-portion, that's the real trouble. He counts on the generosity of the old bore. Well, that's his funeral, not mine.

Senhor Paulo Valdivia, the great business-man of Ipamery, says " Pass " maliciously. His secret happiness is the long string of diamonds in his hand. Amaral, as is his wont, makes a fancy bid. And he is vulnerable. They'll get a penalty out of this. Amaral was a millionaire in his cradle. One doesn't need any brains for that. But I had to begin with nothing.

The Colonel went to three no trumps. Why not? Fedinho had supported him. One has to try. We'll make one under-trick, perhaps.

They go down three. There was no double, the colonel thought. But he was in error. He had not heard Valdivia's double. All right, there was a double. How much is that? The dirty sneer on the face of this upstart fellow. No gentleman, and I can't help it. But dear stupid Fedinho looking like a shot sheep, teeth and eyes protruding now. " Damn your hearts; you had no diamonds, sir."

Deeply offended, " But, my dear colonel . . ."

" Oh, father, diamonds were not even mentioned ! " Luiza said. " How can you ? "

" Really, colonel, it's no fault of mine. I was dummy, you see, and I brought you what was expected from me."

There was the subterranean rumble of revolution when the colonel, furious with himself, insulted Fedinho, the innocent victim of an irrational bidding-process. Amaral threw his cards at Fedinho's collar and silk tie (not into Fedinho's face, as he fancied, and believed, and said afterwards); and Amaral said, in a very loud voice, " Nincompoop !—that's what you are. And a dummy you'll be for life ! " (He didn't say " Republican idiot ! Base slave of tyrannical murderers ! " as he, afterwards, remembered, believed and maintained.)

And when the attorney nearly smashed the card-table and yelled, " Preposterous. You had no diamonds to speak of——"; in this historical minute revolution in Goyaz flared up.

Francisco Fedinho carefully dusted his tie which had not got dusty at all. He glared at the colonel. Senhorita Luiza Amaral was not very far from crying, because her father was behaving like a fool to his guest and before her future brother-in-law. Paulo Valdivia felt greatly annoyed, because the afternoon was wrecked and because he, in so dramatic a situation, could not without inconvenience to himself suggest a settling of accounts.

The attorney glared, and the colonel glared back. But soon the old man was tired with this dumb-show. He swung his gold-knobbed bamboo as if it was the flag of rebellion, and hastened off to the barracks of the Ipamery battalion outside the town.

There the subversive actions he set in train were not in vain. Throughout the last two years the military gentlemen in this stronghold of Goyaz had not had their fill of modern luxuries. They longed for the coming of talking, singing, and all-sorts-of-noise-making pictures into the backwoods of Brazil. Months and months ago Paulo Valdivia had announced the first talkie programme in his Rialto Palace. But they had not yet seen and heard this wonder. Over there in the state of Minas, in the border-town, Araguary, the lucky fellows of the garrison had their pay, their talking films and now they had even a real revolution. "Viva o coronel! Viva a libertade, viva a revolucao!"

Above all, the colonel was a generous man and there would be plenty of wine and sugar-cane brandy and of the rather expensive beer, in honour of Liberty. So "Viva a independenzia! Viva Amaral!"

Once things were set rolling, they moved with more and more speed. Old Amaral did not give a damn for his paltry pension. He thought of the wonderful times he had had in Germany and France, when he had been military attaché to the Brazilian minister and had followed the great manœuvres. He thought, farther back, of himself at the imperial military academy in Rio. He thought of his hand-books about strategy and tactics. He remembered vividly the chapters which concerned "Conquest and Defence of Unfortified Places (Towns, Villages, etc.)."

Amaral took charge of the revolutionary command. He ordered the immediate occupation of the railway station and bridge, the offices of the town council, courts of justice, wireless centre, schools and churches. He had machine guns posted in top floors and steeples. He sent a wireless message to headquarters in Minas Geraes:

> Radical democrats goyaz shook off yoke criminal party stop whole garrison ipamery follow enthusiastically flag liberty justice with passionate support population stop no resistance from few reactionaries stop as soon possible advance to state capital no forces whatsoever there so president cannot refuse hand over nominal power full stop leader revolutionary army goyaz coronel francisco felipe amaral

No, there had not been any resistance. Attorney Fedinho, the " few reactionaries," was offered liberty of movement in, not outside, Ipamery—on parole. The reactionary creature declined and was put into provisional arrest in his own house. The manifesto of radical democracy had to be written and printed and placarded all over the town.

Amaral thought: The chap at the printing firm, Progress, has not yet paid for my last cart-load of sweet potatoes; print of the placard would be red upon white; it's very doubtful whether I should have got the money for the potatoes at all; yes, red upon white in his biggest types, " To the People of Goyaz."

At night the Rialto Palace Cinema was overcrowded. Winkler, the German brewer, made an awful row because they had not reserved his stall. Many people could not obtain tickets. Valdivia, the manager, was ready to risk a gala night performance, and not even at higher prices, as his own contribution to the great festival. Those farmers and landowners who had not paid their taxes were fervently in favour of the revolution—which meant all farmers and landowners, as none had paid his tax. Ipamery was in high spirits. Amaral's brandy and wine contributed to the general elation.

Luiza Amaral, however, was in distress. There was no

train from Rio. Father with his silly revolution went out into the chilly night-air and would certainly have another cold —not to speak of the increasing irritability of his temper. Perhaps dear Sebastiao had had an accident. Perhaps there was no train from Rio any more, blast the idiots! She was so unhappy. Unhappy was her little brother Felipe, too, who wished to join in the revolution, but who unhappily fell into the hands of his impatient father and was sent to bed. Throughout the whole afternoon Felipe and his two most intimate friends had chased each other and rambled in the thick woods along the River Paracanjuba. In the darkness of a huge lancet-leaved ipé tree they had seen the greatest wonder amongst butterflies, blue-glittering Jupiter in all his glamour, with wings as large as soup-plates—or at least as the palms of grown-up men. Felipe was so enormously interested in this revolution, but he had to go to bed. Bother all butterflies! Felipe Amaral cried with rage.

Just before daybreak next morning when the overdue train arrived in the station, the first and only shooting occurred—and it was a mistake. A very young recruit in the bridgehead detachment began to fire off in the simplicity of his heart. He enjoyed this bit of rifle-practice and he did not mean it as anything else. His comrades thought they were fired at from the train and so they shot back. Luckily enough there was no great marksman amongst them and their rifles were not too good and up-to-date. Sebastiao Fedinho, who was returning home from Rio, received a shot that grazed his elbow, and that was all. The martial error was discovered, the firing squad and their would-be victims in the train made peace. The medical man of the battalion bandaged Sebastiao Fedinho's wound. From the moment of this attack Sebastiao behaved with pride and heroic aloofness.

Two hours later Luiza saw her bridegroom with the black

sling and heard what had happened. She did not cry. She made her father perfectly uneasy in being quiet and self-controlled. He would have preferred the worst and most dramatic scene. Revolution is finished! said Luiza in a very low voice. Shake hands with the attorney, otherwise she would jump into the river—and in these old-fashioned countries young girls have not learnt to swim. Amaral was crestfallen and humble; he promised reconciliation with Fedinho; he could not, however, simply stop this revolution, for headquarters had just appointed him commander-in-chief of the Goyaz forces, had congratulated him on his brilliant achievements and said, "Go on." He was not the man to betray his political faith, nay, his Faith and his gallant friends all over the United States of Brazil.

Sebastiao Fedinho dos Peixes acted as umpire in this dispute between bride and father-in-law. He called himself a realist. Once revolution was an accomplished fact he was for revolution. Blood was not to be shed in vain. And afterwards, when he was alone with Amaral, he spoke about Luiza's dowry. It was two hundred contos de reis more than he had reasonably expected. Not in vain had his blood been shed.

That afternoon Lieutenant-General Amaral shook hands with Fedinho the attorney. Each of them thought the other fellow not so bad after all. Each of them was secretly proud of the frank and open words which had been exchanged yesterday. And the Republican attorney accepted graciously the Radical facts.

That afternoon Sebastiao lay in a cool, dimly darkened room and was nursed by Luiza. "Really it is nothing, dearest, I don't feel any pain." She kissed and caressed him and playfully stroked and entangled his thick black hair. A

rift in the closed-down shutters projected an all-colour-film upon the opposite wall. The lawn of the church square hung above the blue sunlit sky. On the screen a solitary soldier of the revolution, always with one foot attached to the earth and grass, and hanging head downwards, went slowly out of sight. The steeple balanced upon its golden weather-cock, and greyish urubu vultures, flying upside down, circled in the deep blue.

That afternoon Padre Antonio, the dean of Ipamery, worked hard and happily at the wedding-sermon designed for the Fedinho-Amaral nuptials. Till now he had been afraid of the political oppositions. Padre Antonio loved mankind and pyrotechnics. He was the most famous fireworks expert in a country where more than anything else in the world they like fireworks. He was a poor preacher of the Word, he humbly thought; but let somebody show him a better pyrotechnist.

That afternoon Felipe Amaral and his two most intimate friends built big fleets of red-and-white revolutionary manifestoes. The ships slid down the quick-flowing deep river Paracanjuba.

That afternoon there were hundreds and hundreds of dead and wounded in Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catharina, Minas, São Paulo, Bahia, and Paraná. That afternoon machine guns mowed down sugar-cane thickets. There was civil war all over Brazil, in coffee and maize and tobacco plantations and in the mining districts. But in Goyaz State, far in the interior, beautiful, quiet, lonely like paradise, revolution was victorious.

H. E. BATES

Beauty's Daughters

It was a small two-storyed farm-house built of brick the colour of sheep-reddle, with a wired-in yard of wooden cow-hovels roofed with corrugated iron that shone white-hot in the straight afternoon sunlight. It stood quite solitary on the rise of land, and without a sign of life; the yard empty even of chickens; the surrounding fields, divided up into set rectangles by fences of wire, empty of cattle; the treeless grass scorched brown under the fierce heat, and the sky empty of birds. As I went up the hedgeless cart-track of summer-baked mud towards the house I looked down at my shoes. They were covered with soft red dust, ironstone dust, the colour of the land all about me. Even the pasture was coloured red; the red dust seemed to be choking the thin brown grass. And then when I looked up again it seemed as if years of wind had blown a bombardment of dust against the house and that the bricks, and even the woodwork, had absorbed it. Beyond the red house the fields continued in bare undulations, scorched up, almost grassless, and beyond the land the sky was a fiery blue, without a shred of cloud. Nothing stirred and nothing seemed to be happening in the stillness of afternoon sunlight. All around the hills were just high enough to shut out the world.

Then when I reached the turn in the track that led into the farmyard I saw a movement beyond the house: the flap of a shirt-sleeve. A man was digging potatoes in a wired-in patch of ground between the house and a line of damson trees. Then as I began to walk across the yard I saw that the house door was open, with splashes of white hen-dung fresh on the threshold.

Then, looking at the man in the potato patch again, I saw something else. A red puff of dust, like the puff of a miniature cannon, rose up every time he dug. And as I went closer I could see the dust, like a red blight, on the dark potato leaves, and on the man's boots, and on his black-green trousers.

I reached the wire and stood there, looking at the man digging. He did not see me. He was a tallish man, dark and very thin: thin straight body, and thinner splayed-out legs, like a split hay-rake. I could not see his face: only his thin back curved and straightened with each lifting of potatoes.

Then I spoke. "Could I get something to drink here?" I said. "Some tea?"

He looked up and round at once: though not at me, but at the house. Even then he did not see me. He stared at the house for a moment and then put his fork in the earth.

"Could I get something to drink?" I said.

He looked up again: but this time at me, startled, with astonishment. He stared hard, with a half-flicker of recognition in his eyes, as though he could not believe I were a stranger. His eyes were very brown: there was a mild, almost sweet look in them, inoffensive, almost childish. Then he saw that he did not know me, and the sweet mildness shot away and left him blank and uneasy.

I tried to reassure him: "I only want a drink," I said. "Tea or something, or water."

"I'll ask her," he said.

His voice was so subdued that I scarcely heard him. And in a moment he was walking away across the potato patch and then across the yard and so into the house.

As I stood waiting for him I leaned back on the fence-wire and looked at the sun-scorched yard and the house. At once I saw why there was so little sign of life about the farm: the dog, a shepherd, lay asleep in the shade of a muck-cart, and the hens, ten or a dozen of them, all raw-necked, were huddled together in the thin shadow of a haystack, in scratched-out nests of dust and hay-seed, half asleep. And besides the man they seemed to be the only living things about the place. Under the still heat it seemed deserted and dead.

Then suddenly it came to life. A girl came half-running out of the house to the yard-pump, with a water-bucket in her hands. She did not see me. She was a heavy, big-breasted girl, about thirty. She had nothing on but a white under-skirt and white skirt-top: no shoes or stockings or hat or corsets, so that I could see the coarse dirt-shiny soles of her feet as she ran, her black curl-pinned hair, and the great unsupported breasts flopping heavily under the thin skirt-top.

She hung the bucket on the pump-spout and began to work the handle. I could hear the pump sucking air in the short intervals between each motion of the squeaking handle. The water seemed a long time coming up, and finally after working the handle madly the girl desisted for a moment, out of breath. I could hear her muttering, and I could see even at that distance the sweat shining yellow on her coarse-fleshed face. Then after a moment she began to work the handle again; and again the pump sucked air and nothing happened, and once more she gave it up.

But this time her anger broke out in a shout.

"Dad! Dad!" She bawled as if he were on the opposite field-slopes. "Dad! Christ Almighty. Where are you? Where the hell are you? Dad!"

Nothing happened. She began to pump again, the pump sucking air as before, she swearing. Every time she lifted her arm I could see the thick sweat-matted hair black under her arm-pits. In anger her face was sullen, passionate, the dark eyebrows close together. But there was one thing about her that was different.

I did not see it until I began to walk across the yard towards her. She had begun to push back her thick hair away from her face, as I came nearer and I saw that she had lovely ears: small, lovely, soft-curved ears that shone very white against her black hair.

Then as I was looking at them and thinking that at any moment she must see me, she stopped pumping again and put her hand on the pump-head and drew herself up and looked down the shaft.

"The bloody pump's dry!" she shouted. The pump-shaft magnified the words, so that they rang out hollow and heavy and more blatant.

And they must have reached the house. For suddenly the man reappeared, half-running. "All right, May, I'm coming," he said. He kept repeating the words as he hurried across the yard to the pump.

"About time!" she shouted.

"What's up?"

"The bloody pump's dry."

"All right, leave it to me. I'll see to it, May. I'll do it." He spoke in a half-frightened voice, apologetically. "All right, May, I'll do it. Leave it to me."

"I tell y' it's dry!"

" All right, all right. I knowed it were running low."

" But I wanna git washed ! "

" All right, May, all right."

He stood by the pump, tiptoe, and looked down the shaft.

" If we could git some water down it'd suck up," he said.

" Well, git some, then, git some. Quick."

" Ain't no water nearer 'n Red Link," he said.

" Christ." She stood furious, clicking her tongue madly. " And we wanna go out." Then suddenly she seized the bucket. " Christ. Give us the damn bucket. Come here. I'll wash in milk."

She took the bucket, turned, and started to run back into the house. And turning, she saw me.

At once a miracle happened. By that time I was standing only seven or eight yards away from her, in a direct line between her and the house, so that she had to come past me. And seeing me standing there, looking at her, she was transformed. She shook back her hair with a gesture of almost timid quickness, a sudden and almost absurd act of modesty, as though she were scared at the sight of me. Then she put her free arm flat across her breasts so as to cover them. Then she set her lips straight and drew in her breath and held herself almost primly. And she was looking at the ground until the moment of going past me.

She looked up for the fraction of a second as she went past. And she spoke.

" Good afternoon." It was a soft, ladylike, quite gentle " Good afternoon," and the voice was so unlike the voice that had bawled across the yard that I was too astonished to speak. And she went on into the house.

The man was working the pump-handle in a series of quick motions, trying to suck up the water, as I reached him. But

the sinker was still sucking dry and he gave it up when he saw me come.

" That's about the last on it," he said. " We're praying for rain."

Then he remembered :

" Oh ! " he said, " she says it's all right. She'll put you up."

For a moment I didn't say anything. I was tired, but I hadn't asked if they could put me up. Then I tried speaking very quietly, with my face half turned away.

" I asked about a drink," I said.

The man gave no answer. Then I remembered that I must have been ten or twelve yards from him when I first spoke. And looking at his face I saw that it was a deaf face : it had the soft, touching, half-stupid look of quiet vacancy that the faces of the deaf have. It was responsible for the look of blank fear and the sweet mild expression in the dark eyes. It explained why he had come so slowly in answer to the girl and why he had misunderstood me.

And when I spoke again I raised my voice a little :

" All right," I said. " Thank you."

" She's gitten' the room ready now."

" All right. But can I have a drink ? "

" Ain't no water," he said, " only milk. You don't fancy that I expect ? "

" Anything," I said.

" I'll git it."

He began to walk across the yard. Looking after him, I saw something white moving at one of the bedroom windows. It was a girl : not the girl I had already seen, but another. She was combing her hair and watching me : combing the hair straight through, then tossing it back and then looking at the comb, all the time pretending she did not see me. Then

she vanished behind the curtain, abruptly, as though she had been pulled there. And in her place I could see a woman: a big florid woman, like an older and fatter replica of the girl I had already seen. She took one look at me and vanished.

Before I could see who appeared in her place the man was calling from the door:

"I never thought. Come in. I never thought about you standing out there in the sun."

I followed him into the house, through the front door and along the red-brick passage. The white and grey splashes of hen dung became mixed with bluish-white splashes of milk as I went further into the house, the trail following the bend of the passage, and finally at the foot of the stairs a great star-splash of milk lay on the bricks.

Just beyond the stairs the man stopped, his hand on a door-knob. "You make y'self at home in here," he said. "She'll be down in a minute."

He opened the door and I just had time to see a deal table covered with dirty dinner crocks before the man hastily shut it again.

"Huh!" he said.

He walked across the passage at once and opened another door. They were old-fashioned varnished doors, with comb-grained patterns and knots of sepia and gold. And for a moment, when the man pushed it, the second door stuck, as though the varnish had liquefied in the heat. Then it opened all of a sudden. And the man burst in.

"Better come in here," he said.

Going in, I met the summer stale odour of the shut-up room coming out with a rush. It was stiffling. Half-stupefied flies were crawling up the closed windows and on the varnished wall-paper and the oil-smoked ceiling and the pier-glass standing on the green plush-draped mantelpiece.

" She'll be down in a minute," the man said. The words were like a chant of reassurance. I put my rucksack down on the oil-clothed floor. " All right," I said again, but he left the room hurriedly, without having heard. When he had gone I sat down and stared at the gramophone.

I could not help staring at it. Standing in the centre of the table, surrounded by black piles of records, its horn was like some great yawning ship's ventilator in blue and gold. Looking at it, I wondered and waited. Nobody came. Then I listened; and I could hear the clatter of crockery and then the bump of feet in the rooms above. Every now and then the bumps would increase, shaking the glass in the brass oil-lamp hanging from the ceiling. But still nobody came. And the room was intolerable. I began to separate the stale odours: odours of sun-stale air and sour milk and hens and then the softer odours of stale cigarette smoke and women's scent and women's clothes. At last I got up and walked round the room, looking at the cheap pictures on the walls and the tea-caddies on the cheap sideboard, all the stale paraphernalia of the farm-house front-room, seeing nothing to interest me until I came back to the gramophone and the pier-glass again.

Then I saw that the pier-glass frame was filled with all sorts of gilded and silver-lettered cards of invitation, stuck one above another: " The Committee of the Oakwood Tennis Club request the pleasure of the company of Mrs. and Miss Rita and Miss May Thompson, at a Dance;" " Lord and Lady St. John of Dean request the pleasure of the company of Mrs. and Miss Rita and Miss May Thompson, at the Servants' Ball." " Mrs. and Miss Rita and Miss May Thompson are cordially invited to . . ."

I was still reading the cards when the bumping began upstairs again. Suddenly it grew louder and nearer, and a

second or two later the door opened and Mrs. Thompson came in.

" Good afternoon," she said. " Do please excuse me."

It was the same ladylike, put-on voice with which the daughter had murmured her almost timid " Good afternoon " as she hurried past me into the house. And the mother was like the daughter : the same florid body, with the big breasts, the heavy-fleshed passionate face, the black rope-thick hair. An odour of flesh and violets rushed in with her, half driving away the sun-staleness of the room. And she was dressed all in white : white shoes and stockings and a dress of white silk that stretched skin-tight over her big breasts and hips, leaving her arms bare to the shoulders. She was an imposing woman, and there was no doubt that once she had been a beauty. Now she looked like a fat white pigeon.

" That's all right," I said.

" I'll take you up to see your room," she said.

She opened the door and I followed her across the milk-splashed passage and up the oil-clothed stairs, carrying my rucksack. Going up behind her I could see nothing but her fat white back and her tight-clothed heavy hams straining and quivering with the exertion of climbing. It was only when she turned the bend in the stairs at the top that I could see her face ; and I saw then that she had the same little, soft-shaped white ears as the daughter.

A minute later we stood in the bedroom. White bed, white-washed stand, blue ivy growing on white wall-paper : it seemed all right.

" It's all right," I said. " But what I want most is a drink. Some tea."

" I'll do my best," she said. " But the water is running out. We're praying for rain."

I thought for a moment of asking her when she prayed for rain, and how, and how often, but she went on :

" How long will you stay ? "

" I shall be away to-morrow morning," I said. " Early."

" The room will be eight-and-six," she said.

She kept fingering the silver locket-chain where it touched her breast.

" What does that include ? " I said.

" Everything."

" It's more than I wanted to pay."

" It includes everything."

I stood in thought. What did she mean by everything ?

" It includes a good supper and a good breakfast," she said.

" And tea ? "

She hesitated. Then :

" Yes, and tea."

" All right," I said.

I dropped my rucksack on the floor. She still stood waiting. All the time she was the lady, speaking with that put-on aristocratic voice that nevertheless had something in it faintly hostile. And still the lady, but a little more hostile than before, she said :

" Could I ask you to pay for the room in advance ? "

" It isn't usual."

She smiled by merely pressing her lips together, so that they widened a little, but without opening. All the time she kept up the ladylike fingering of the locket on her bare breast.

" I don't know you," she said.

" You don't think I shall run off without paying," I said.

" Oh ! no. Not that."

Then what ? I said nothing. It was a deadlock. And there we stood : she the ladylike white pigeon, fingering her

locket, I looking straight at her, for some reason uneasy, not speaking only because I did not know what to say.

And then the door opened. It burst open abruptly and the young daughter was in the room before either the mother or I could move.

"Rita!"

"I'm sorry, mother."

"What do you want coming into the gentleman's room?"

"Nothing."

"Don't be so silly. What do you want? Haven't I brought you up better than that?"

"A handkerchief."

"Where do you keep them?"

"In the second drawer, mother."

The mother strutted across the room to the chest of drawers and opened the second drawer. While she was finding the handkerchief I took one look at the girl. She seemed about nineteen, and as she stood there, with her bright red dress and black hair showing up against the white bedroom door, the hair curled back away from her small white ears, I thought she looked lovely. Later she would run to fat, acquire that same grossness as her sister and mother, but now she was delightful, her sallow face plump but delicate, her breasts firm and sweet as oranges, her naked arms smooth and pinky white, like barked willow. And there was a kind of sulky hauteur about her, only half-conscious, a kind of natural immobile contempt, as if to say, "Damn you, who do you think you are? And who are you staring at?"

In another moment the mother was hustling her out of the room. "Now you know better than that in future. Here's your handkerchief," and so on. I could hear them going downstairs, the mother's voice purposely raised in reprimand so that I could hear it.

And the mother did not come back. I began to unpack my things, and then, all of a sudden, I heard the long ripping shriek of a car hooter. After the first long shriek there were two or three shorter jerked hoots, and then a longer one, and then the short ones again.

I went to the window and looked out. The car was standing down on the road, at the end of the cart-track. Two men were in it: one was sitting in the driving seat pressing the hooter-button, the second was standing up. He was whistling with his fingers in his mouth. The man sitting down had his hair cut with long side-linings that came low down on his cheeks. Every now and then the other would cease whistling and shout something and wave his hand. They were wearing straw-hats.

In about another minute the three women, the two daughters first, and then the mother, floundering behind, began to run across the farm-yard and down the cart-track. They were dressed up to the nines, flashily, and as they ran the man on the hooter played short excited notes of encouragement. The mother, floundering behind, very soon ceased running and began to walk. She was still walking down the cart-track long after the two girls had reached the car and were sitting inside, laughing with the men at the sight of her floundering and stumbling in her white high-heeled shoes down the wheel-rough track.

Finally, the men ceased hooting and calling and began to clap her, as though she were coming in from a race. They were all hilarious and friendly by the time she reached the car, and when the car began to move down the road I could see her sitting on the knees of the man behind, laughing and giggling with her head thrown back and her mouth opened like a fat contralto.

It was strangely silent when the car had gone. The farm

seemed to recapture abruptly the deadness of the hot afternoon. I could feel the silence of the house and the fields about it: a scorching August silence, without wind or birds.

I went downstairs at last to find the tea the woman had promised me.

The house was deserted. A cup and saucer and a plate had been laid on the front-room table by the gramophone, there was no teapot and no milk or sugar.

I went outside to look for Thompson. The yard was deserted too. I called once, but no one answered.

And then suddenly I saw Thompson. He was coming over the brow of the nearest field, carrying two water-buckets on a sway-tree. He began to quicken his pace a little when he saw me and he was spilling the water rapidly over his legs and boots when he came into the yard.

"Ain't y'ad no tea?" he said.

"No," I said.

"They gone?"

I told him they must have been going as he came across the field. Hadn't he seen them? He was silent. Already he had set down the buckets by the pump; now he picked them up again and began to walk towards the house, motioning me with his head to follow him.

In the house Thompson boiled the kettle and I got some tea about half-past six. He scarcely spoke to me while he was getting the tea. Dumb embarrassment seemed to govern all his movements, and I scarcely spoke myself, partly because I could see he was troubled, partly because I was afraid always of his not hearing me.

The sunlight was going rapidly, but it was still hot and more than ever silent when I went out into the farmyard again. Thompson was still carrying water. He was filling a wooden cattle tub that stood by the kitchen door. He must

have made by that time half a dozen journeys with the sway-tree, and the tub held less than a foot of water.

"If you'd got another yoke and the buckets," I said, "I could give you a hand."

"You rest," he said.

"I'm rested. I haven't come far."

"What d'ye call far?"

"Twenty miles."

He stared at me. I could see that he thought it a great distance, that I had come from somewhere beyond his world.

"Go on," I said, "let me help."

"You couldn't manage the yoke," he said. "You rest."

"I learnt to carry a sway-tree," I said, "when I was so little the buckets dragged along the ground."

"Ah?"

He stood a moment longer, considering. Then he seemed to accept me.

"You take this," he said. He set the sway-tree across the buckets. "I'll git another."

So we began to make the journeys across the field together, to fetch the water. The spring came out of the hillside beyond the brow of the first fenced-in field, and the earth was so red there that the water seemed, at first sight, to gush out like watery blood. But in the buckets it was wonderfully clear, like ice. We went on making the journeys for more than an hour. It was a short journey, simply past the potato patch and across the field and half-way down the hill, but it seemed long sometimes because, from first to last, Thompson never spoke a word. He just walked and stared at the sky. Then when he did speak it was to repeat himself, like someone nervous. "How far did you say you come? How far did you say you come?" And then I would tell him again, raising my voice a little for fear he had not heard. "Twenty

miles." And once I said, "Twenty miles. From Langford up through Dean and Nassingham."

"Nassingham?" he said at once. "You come through Nassingham?"

"Yes."

"That's where I were married," he said. "That's where she comes from."

Gradually, after that, he talked a little more, but still repetitively, as though nervous of himself or me.

"What's it like now, Nassingham? What's it like? Changed I expect. I ain't been down there for ten year. I reckon it's bigger?"

Then he would stop talking of the town, and talk of the weather. At the spring or by the cattle-tub, after he had set the buckets down, we always stood for a moment and looked at the cloudless sky, a dark tawny yellowish-blue at the horizon edge. Then as we made more journeys it seemed to grow hotter and more oppressive. I could feel the sweat running in warm trickles down my back. And finally Thompson said:

"Might be some thunder about. God, we ain't had a drop for three weeks, not for three weeks."

It was after eight o'clock before we made the last journey and the water-tub was full. I was hungry, and glad when Thompson said:

"She say anything about your supper?"

"Yes. We arranged it," I said. But I knew that whatever supper I had he would have to get. And I went on: "I'll have mine when you have yours. That's all right."

"I'm goin' have mine now. You sit and rest. I'll call you."

Half an hour later we sat together in the kitchen and ate fried eggs and thick fat bacon and drank big cups of strong

tea. Thompson hardly spoke and I was relieved when it was over and we went outside again.

"I got to shut the chicken up," he said.

After we had shut the chicken house we sat outside the front-door, Thompson on a sawing-horse, I squatting on the doorstep. With the falling dusk odd fowls were beginning to cry across the silent fields, the only sound in the hot air. There was no wind: the only trees, the old damson trees beyond the potatoes, drooped their scorched leaves, half-dead, in a stillness that was almost ominous. The world seemed in suspense. It seemed as if the thunder must come up with the darkness.

We sat there for a long time, keeping up a kind of vigil while the twilight thickened and deepened, our eyes fixed alternately on the sky and the darkening fields.

"It ain't been so bad as this since I bin here," Thompson said. "Never had to carry water afore. They reckon it were as bad nineteen-'leven, but that were a year afore I come. But I never remember it as bad."

Once I asked him how large the farm was, and he said:

"Near enough eighty acres. Pretty near all grass. It gits a-top on me. I only got a man and a boy."

"You've got your daughters," I said.

That began it. It was as though the remark had touched a hidden spring in him. He almost turned on me:

"What good d'ye think they are? Eh? What good d'ye think they are?"

I couldn't answer. He answered for me.

"Nothing! Not a damn thing. *You* see how it is, don't you? Anybody can see how it is! You can see, can't you?"

"Yes."

"You know why she put you up?"

"No."

"That's her idea—wants to make a damn boarding-house of the place. Tennis court. Tables in th' orchard. She was a servant in a boarding-house before she married me—down in Nassingham. That's how I met her."

"Would it pay?" I said.

"Eh? Would it what?" Then the echo of the word seemed to reach him. "Pay? That's all she thinks about. Money. Pay. Money to throw about. And she's bringing the gals up like it too—money, tearing about, men, drink, everything. They used to be nice kids. Now look at 'em."

He would go on like this for several minutes, talking in his soft husky voice, almost to himself, pouring out to me all the grievances pent up in him by time and solitude. And then suddenly he would break off, as though too exhausted and disgusted to go on, or as though he were uncertain of my confidence. After the nervous sound of his voice the silence seemed profounder than ever, the air more oppressive and hushed. Every moment it seemed that the thunder must come, but the air never stirred and the silence was never broken except by Thompson's voice going on in bitter complaint again.

"They gone off somewhere to-night. Dancing. A booze-up somewhere. I shan't see them gals till four o'clock to-morrow afternoon. They'll stop a-bed all day. What d'ye think o' that? That's a nice damn thing, ain't it?"

"Why don't you do something?" I said.

He was silent. I thought for a moment that perhaps he hadn't heard me, and I repeated the words. But he still kept silent. He sat staring at the ground, in thought, dejected.

And finally when he did speak he said:

"What could I do?"

I didn't know what to say to him. What could he do?

"I tried all ways," he said. "She never lets me speak to

'em. I don't have to say half a word afore she's down on me. As if they never belonged to me."

So, gradually, from what he said and from what he didn't say, I began to see that somewhere there was a fundamental weakness in him : a lack of aggression, of spirit or vindictiveness, something hard to define, a little crack of gentleness running right across his nature. All his anger and bitterness was shadowy : shadowed over by his affection for the two girls. Underneath he was heart-broken. Whenever he spoke of the daughters that unconscious tenderness for them asserted itself, softening his voice and his rage.

" I told her she wanted to make street women on 'em," he said, " tarts, and she's done it. That's what she's done. And she's as bad. Worse. I don't know what I shall do. But one o' these days I shall do summat. I shall do summat. I waited long enough." He was trembling.

We sat up till nearly midnight. There was no sign of rain. Long after I was in bed I was woke up by the sound of voices under the window.

" Don't be silly. You can't come up." It was the younger daughter's voice. " You can't."

" Why not ? "

" He's there. I told you. A boarder."

" Boarder. Huh. Can't I come in at all ? Rita ! Rita ! "

Then silence; and then softly again, " Rita, Rita ! " until the words changed to mere whispers and the whispers at last to silence.

In the morning it was six o'clock by the kitchen clock when I came downstairs. The kitchen door was open, but the place seemed deserted. I waited about in the kitchen for a time, but no one came, and finally I went into the front room, wondering if breakfast had been laid there for me.

There was no breakfast. Gramophone records lay strewn

about the table, and the room was sour. And suddenly I saw the girl, Rita, lying asleep, still in the red dress, on the sofa under the window.

I went out again and into the kitchen, and then I noticed a teapot standing on the dresser and by it a cup with tea dregs in it. The pot was warm, and I found myself a cup and poured out the tea and then drank it standing up, staring out of the window at the sunshine on the yard outside. The air was as hot as ever and beyond the yard the scorched fields stretched out parched and dewless, the sky beyond them as clear as glass.

Finally, when I had finished the tea I put eight-and-six on the table and went outside. The Sunday morning world seemed empty except for Thompson's hens pecking round a stack of early wheat. I waited about for a time but nothing happened, and at last I began to walk away.

Then, half-way down the cart-track, I saw Thompson. He was standing in the field across which we had journeyed with the water. He was standing on the brow of the field. quite still, staring away from me, towards the sun. I called him. "Hi! Mister Thompson." Nothing happened. He did not move. Then I called again. "Thompson. Hi! Mister Thompson." But still nothing happened. Then I realised that he could not hear me, and at last I began to walk on, slowly, turning at intervals and watching him in case he should turn too.

And when, far down the road, I turned and looked back, he was still standing there. He stood with a slight droop of the shoulders, like someone partly in dejection and partly in hope, his eyes fixed on the distance, as though he were waiting for something: for the chance of a cloud, for rain, for something altogether beyond his control and perhaps beyond his understanding.

Amiable Confessions

The Road to the Temple

TOWARDS the end of 1918, crushed by the War but fiercely endeavouring to find some means of reconciliation to life which would provide me with sufficient incentive to go on living it, I became the author of a bad but desperately sincere little poem. This minor effort was subsequently included in an insignificant and short-lived volume entitled *Verses of a V.A.D.*, and has since been reproduced, together with other equally bad, equally desperate and equally sincere little verses, in *Poems of the War and After*. It was called " The Aspirant," and ran as follows :

" Because I dare to stand outside the gate
Of that high temple wherein fame abides,
And loudly knock, too eager to await
Whate'er betides,

" May God forgive, since He alone can see
The joys that others have but I must miss :
For how shall compensation come to me
If not through this ? "

Since I had thus decided, so long ago as 1918, that the adoption of a writer's profession represented the sole justification for continuing an existence which seemed likely, at

the time, to offer no private consolation, I was somewhat disconcerted to receive the other day a review of *Testament of Youth* which recently appeared in an Australian newspaper. As criticism this review was more than sufficiently genial and appreciative, but it selected my book, together with *San Michele*, *The Revolt in the Desert* and several others, as an example of the fact that many of the most widely read volumes within recent years have been the work of non-professional writers.

This unexpected relegation to an amateur status dazed and depressed me considerably. I had always imagined the difference between amateur and professional occupation to be a matter less of prestige than of economics, and found myself eagerly reckoning up the dozen or so years in which my writings had been the main support of first myself and then a household. I cannot, however, really account for the furious and foolish resentment which suddenly possessed me against this non-recognition of my professional standing by an obscure overseas critic, unless its roots lay deep in the youthful antagonism long ago provoked by a complacent family assumption that no feminine achievement could ever be anything but that of an amateur.

I had not, of course, expected my unknown Australian critic to be familiar with the free-lance journalism which had represented my chief source of revenue during the first ten years of my professional life. Still less did I suppose that he had heard even a rumour of the five books which I published before *Testament of Youth*, since the combined sales of those abortive works did not amount to three thousand copies all told—an absurd total which the more fortunate *Testament* easily outdistanced on its first terrifying day of publication.

I had, however, imagined that my reviewer, before writing

his criticism, had in the normal routine fashion read my book, and although *Testament of Youth* was chiefly intended as a lament for a lost generation of men and a protest against the senseless fate which destroyed them, it had certainly related, as a modest sideline, the story of a young woman's determination to become a writer which had struggled and ultimately prevailed against War and the loss of a world, to say nothing of family scepticism, university opposition, voluntary penury for the sake of freedom, marriage, motherhood, and the persistent encroachment of a thousand incompatible claims. But I realise sympathetically that in these strange days when there seems to be little alternative between outrageous overwork and complete unemployment, a busy reviewer may well be forgiven for failing to endure to the end of a very long book. Since the majority of readers of my *Testament* have doubtless, for this and more unflattering reasons, similarly fallen by the wayside, let me here attempt to recapitulate the story of my impertinent but assiduous onslaught upon the walls of my resistant but revered profession.

Before I reached the age of eleven I had written five "novels." My practical, realistic and stoutly middle-class Staffordshire family had no contact with highbrow circles, which they disliked socially and despised financially, so I regret to say that these early efforts were influenced by nothing more promisingly classical than *The Wide, Wide World*, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, the saccharine novels of L. T. Meade, and the emotional but absorbing romances of Mrs. Henry Wood. Like the works that inspired them, my stories were full of misunderstandings and catastrophes, of early deaths, agonised soliloquies and death-bed scenes and repentances, which wrung from me, as I wrote them, delicious tears of undescribable pathos. They were, moreover, treacly and

stiff with religious sentiment, of a quality sufficiently earnest to convey to the numerous readers of *Testament of Youth* who have written to challenge, chide or commiserate with me for my scepticism on the subject of immortality, the impression that ever since the age of twelve I have been steadily sliding down a slippery slope to perdition.

The first of these early "novels" was entitled *The Five Schoolgirls*. Written at the age of seven, it was copiously and dramatically illustrated by the author, and ran to perhaps three thousand words, divided into short chapters each preceded by a quotation. The quotation above the first chapter represented two lines from a long-lost religious poem, also by the author:

> "When everything seems dull, one gleaming star
> Alone can guide the sinner's wandering eye."

After this effort I evidently decided—as I have done with such fortunate frequency in later years—that I really was no poet, and would be far better employed in diverting such talent as I possessed to the medium of prose, for all the subsequent quotations were borrowed from the most heart-rending verses of my favourite eschatological hymns:

> "Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes . . ."

> "And with the morn those angel-faces smile,
> Which I have loved long since and lost awhile."

The Five Schoolgirls, cherished by my mother as an example of amusing if quite unimportant precocity, still continues its tattered and melodramatic existence in some family trunk or storeroom, but I am less certain of the fate of its four successors, all of which dealt with the loves, tragedies and deaths of "grown-ups." In those days it would never have occurred to me to make the insincere claim to pure invention uninspired

by vital contact with reality—" All the characters in this novel are imaginary "—by means of which many authors now guard themselves against the hysterical onslaughts of libel-suit maniacs, for my *dramatis personæ* were all taken, frankly and rapturously, from real life. In our town lived a family with five pretty daughters, whose ages ranged from about fifteen to twenty-six. Until I reached the period of adolescence, my passions were all unashamedly homosexual, and around the imaginary lives of these five young women I wove my dreams and built my stories. They were not amongst my parents' calling acquaintances, and so far as I remember I never even spoke to one of them, but I became a skilled adept in discovering when and where they were likely to be met, and in persuading my governess to take me for walks through their section of the town.

Two of the tales in which my heroines loved, wept and died were called *Edith's Trial* and *The Feud of the Cousins*. The others have disappeared even from memory. Each evening, however, during the bedtime half-hour which I invariably spent in telling my brother stories of a semi-ornithological community known to us both as " The Dicks," the five sisters, by some subtle process of childish metamorphosis, became transformed into fairies, princesses, or maiden sacrifices to legendary monsters. Not until we left that town for another in which I was sent to school did their hold upon my imagination relax.

For a year or two the normal demands of a day school diverted my energies into more orthodox if less dramatic channels—amongst others to the improvement of my handwriting, which, although it had been responsible for so many stories, still remained, in accordance with my head-mistress's contemptuous but just description, " exactly like a cook's." By the time that my calligraphy had caught up with my

inventiveness, the homosexual proclivities of my childhood had been replaced by those heterosexual predilections upon which, in all the normal girls of my generation, the War was shortly to wreak such havoc. Hence my next two "novels" —both unfinished—no longer described expiring schoolgirls or adult feminine tragedies, but concerned themselves with the activities, both real and fictitious, of two athletic twin youths, some four years my senior, whom I encountered at skating, tobogganning and juvenile dances.

At the boarding school to which I was sent to "complete" my education, the growing excitements of the real world—destined, alas! for an excitement so much more titanic and disastrous than I was capable of inventing even in my most mythological moments—encroached upon and soon eclipsed the melodramatic fancies which I had insistently hung upon such mediocre individual pegs. As I moved up from class to class, the subjects set for the various essays became comprehensive enough to capture and hold my undisciplined imagination, while at the stimulating expositions of a head-mistress whose mental vision was far in advance of the teaching standards of her day and the pre-war type of private school which she had elected to control, the barriers that then rigidly divided History, Literature, Economics, Politics and Religion into water-tight compartments tumbled down before me for ever. Beyond our peaceful playing-fields the world was drifting feverishly towards Armageddon. Algeciras, Herzegovina, Bosnia, Tripoli, Agadir—the unfamiliar, romantic names were as fuel to the flame of my growing political enthusiasms, so naïve, so idealistic, so youthfully unaffected by the writing which the hand of destiny was already inscribing on the wall.

In the year of the *Panther's* ominous expedition to Morocco, my sympathetic head-mistress found new occupation for my

questing pen by making me editor of the School Magazine. I fell upon this task with avidity, and spent the annihilating heat of those summer holidays in happily compensating for the usual shortage of contributions by writing practically the whole of the magazine myself. In the passionate four-page editorial that I substituted for the modest column of previous years, I found myself vaguely groping, for the first time, towards the type of technique and construction which, after eighteen more years of experiment, I was to elaborate in *Testament of Youth*. The possibility of throwing private and local events into perspective by describing them against an immense political and social background, of illuminating vast historic tendencies by showing their effect upon personal relationships, began to fascinate me with the stupendousness of the scope that it offered to the creative writer; and although my childish vision of colossal literary potentialities was then as fleeting as the shadows cast by passing clouds upon the Surrey downs across the valley beneath our school windows, I found myself struggling to establish some kind of synthesis between the previous term's cricket matches and picnics and examinations, and the sultry record of strikes and Parliament Bill debates and international crises which determined the history of that menacing summer.

Never since those days have my journalistic activities been so exuberantly unhampered; never has any newspaper proprietor for whom I have worked turned upon the printer's bill an eye so indulgent as that of my head-mistress. Perhaps, in a school where the majority of girls were anything but career-seekers, she felt that the expense was worth the encouragement for which it paid. Always she did me the honour of regarding the ultimate fulfilment of my ambitions —so ludicrous to the other girls and to my nonsense-deriding relatives—as a genuine possibility; she even gave an occa-

sional jolt to family scepticism in my school reports. "Excellent work. Vera will write some day," ran one comment that I recall on my History essays—a comment, alas! which was regarded at home as merely the absurd though pardonable extravagance of a well-educated but unpractical woman. One of my greatest regrets to-day is the death of this head-mistress before my persevering pen had achieved the most modest approach to general recognition. She will always survive in my memory as the genuine, heaven-born teacher, asking no better reward for herself than the ultimate triumph of her few aspiring pupils.

In retrospect I seem to have written nothing worthy of confession between the close of my school-days and the ending of the War. For a brief period the uncongenial obligations of provincial adulthood froze me into resentful silence, followed by exacting but stimulating months in which the claims of a double Oxford examination took full toll of my time and thought. Then, simultaneously, I fell violently in love and the world went violently to war; and at once my creative life became intensely, poignantly personal, pouring itself for nearly five years into letters and diaries until, at last, there was nobody left to whom to write and no surviving emotion that seemed worthy of record. Emptied of everything but the determination to fight my way against opposition and discouragement to the temple of literary renown, I returned to the unbelievable Oxford of 1919, a writer in nobody's eyes but my own.

In the prehistoric days which had included the first year of the War, an established author had said to me that Oxford was of no use to a would-be writer unless she intended to devote herself to "treatises." How true this verdict may be of normal Oxford I have no means of judging, for the Oxford to which I went back was in the highest degree

abnormal, and in its abnormality lay something that in the long run was to induce an extraordinary number of its post-war sons and daughters to seek distinction in the field of contemporary literature. I was far from being the only lost soul who wandered about Boar's Hill or Christ Church Meadows, haunted by the War and ferociously seeking some means of reconciling it through literature to life. Edmund Blunden, Charles Morgan, Louis Golding, Winifred Holtby, Robert Graves, Robert Nichols, L. A. G. Strong—how much the present world of letters would lose if deprived of their names! It was not surprising that the simultaneous presence of these and a number of others who to-day are only a degree less famous should have produced a species of Renaissance in University journalism and poetry, which expressed itself in a sudden spectacular outcrop of undergraduate magazines.

Disapproved of by the feminine college authorities, and regarded, as were most women students in those days, with suspicious antagonism by the male undergraduate community, I pushed my frantic, isolated self into the midst of that mental and spiritual reawakening from disaster and death. To the second number of *The Oxford Outlook*, edited by N. A. Beecham and Beverley Nichols, I contributed an injudicious but relief-giving article arrogantly criticising the critical women students to whose manners and values I was readapting myself with much grief and pain. The next term I began to write for the local *Oxford Chronicle*, and during the summer following I acted, in collaboration with Alan Porter and C. H. B. Kitchin, as editor of *Oxford Poetry, 1920* —surely, of all that long series, the most remarkable for the quality of its contributors, who represented the literary survivors of seven or more generations of undergraduates.

After I had learnt, in the blazing August of 1921, that my

rusty, war-sodden mind had achieved only a Second in Modern History instead of the First for which my tutors had hoped, a sudden regret for the hours spent in reading undergraduate manuscripts, or in airing undergraduate pretensions in local newspapers, seized upon my remorseful and humiliated conscience. But the regret, like the conscience, was short-lived, and has never revived. When I found myself—after nearly a decade strangely spent in alternatively playing the parts of " nurse " and " student "—at last free, if I still had sufficient energy, to begin my long-deferred writer's career, the minor satisfactions and successes of Oxford journalism alone gave me the courage and confidence necessary for attacking the embattled fastnesses of editors to whose adamant incredulity the half-amused, half-bored scepticism of my family was as water unto wine. At Oxford I had written, and in minor fashion published my writings, on equal terms with a number of young men whose quality, which then seemed to me considerable, both critics and public have subsequently endorsed. Despite sufficient rejection slips to paper a public library, I refused to believe that what had been done at Oxford could not be repeated in the world at large.

In those first anxious years of struggle to enter the most remorselessly competitive of professions, one of my greatest disadvantages lay—as to some extent it still lies—in the complete failure of my appearance to convey any impression of intelligence. Even now, two decades after the War broke in upon the end of our 'teens and eclipsed for ever the dawning sweet exhilaration of first youth, I am still too often greeted by editors and lecture organisers with sceptical though polite disappointment.

" But you look so young ! I was expecting somebody much older ! I can't believe you've *really* been through all

those experiences your book describes . . . you *did* say it was actual autobiography, didn't you . . . ? "

Remarks which would be amusing enough, and even, in a wry sort of way, complimentary to the incongruous but persistent survival of certain youthful qualities, were it not that the significance of everything which I now try to write or to say depends exclusively upon being believed without question or suspicion.

Ten, eleven, twelve years ago, my immature, naïve exterior almost invariably struck those for whom I wanted to work as humorous in the extreme. It was useless to base my claim to editorial attention upon any kind of past experience, for nothing about me suggested that I had had it.

" My dear young lady ! " deplored the editor of a now defunct Liberal daily to whom I sought to offer the literary fruits of a journey through the occupied territories of Central Europe, " the only kind of article we want from you is one containing Human Interest. . . ."

That persistent " H. I." of popular journalism—how infuriatingly it used to present itself to a pen which only desired to write earnestly of political, international and social problems ! It took me at least seven years to learn the lesson which I now sedulously apply in all my journalism—the lesson that, with tact and skill, " H. I." subjects in popular journals may camouflage the most revolutionary reinterpretations of current moralities and creeds. In the early nineteen-twenties I had still to discover that direct propaganda, however intelligent, is ineffective compared with the success in " putting over " subversive doctrines which may be achieved through the medium of light dissertations upon such innocent-looking domestic topics as " How Should I Bring Up My Daughter ? " and " If I Were a Bride To-day."

Only after I had written two immature and melodramatic

but not wholly disregarded novels did the anxious, humiliating approaches from myself to editors begin occasionally to be mitigated by agreeable approaches from themselves to me—a result which suggests, as I now always tell those young literary aspirants who are foolish enough to seek my advice, that the publication of even a bad book is of far greater value in arousing interest and giving publicity to a beginner than any number of technically competent and worthy articles. It was not until I rediscovered, in the writing of those early novels, the same possibility of combining " H. I." with the changing background of social and political history which I had once fleetingly visualised when engaged upon the childish production of a school editorial, that I began to tread with hope and confidence the alluring pavements of that Fleet Street which, as an enraptured seventeen-year-old girl travelling on the top of a bus to London Bridge in the glow of a November sunset, I had vowed one day to enter as a valued contributor.

By 1925 the period of encouragement and acceptance had definitely begun. Marriage, and a year in America, meant temporary interruption, but the experience of a new relationship and a new continent more than atoned for the trivial disadvantages of absence, and the subsequent birth of two children proved less of an impediment to literary production than I had ever supposed possible for such momentous domestic occurrences. Towards the end of 1929, with the second baby still to come, I took up my pen to attempt yet again, in fear and desperation, a task so much greater than any I had yet achieved that its magnitude had again and again defeated me—and found, to my astonished relief, that I was at last able to begin that story of a crucified generation which for ten years had haunted my days and dominated my dreams.

HUMBERT WOLFE

Art and a Sense of Humour

I HAVE in recent weeks as a result of illness been completely divorced from the contemporary world of letters. In the compulsory quiet thus imposed I have had the opportunity of surveying the contest from above, or at least beyond the battle. And I use the trite military simile of design. What struck me most in my period of comparative calm were the restlessness, the clamour, the rivalries, the rancours, and, if they had been full-blooded enough, even the hatreds of the creative world. If a visitor from another planet had found his way hither, been presented with the swirl of business and politics, turning thence with disgust he would naturally have sought for noble peace among those devoted to the cause of beauty. And how crazily disappointed, I reflected, would such a one have been. For among painters, sculptors, architects, musicians and writers—the chosen of the Muses—there eddy in virulent gusts all the gases of envy, malice, ignorance and brutal destructiveness. The ancients spoke of the *odium theologicum*. Mild, indeed, it seemed to me if compared with the *odium artisticum*—mild, that is, rather in theory than in practice. For the priests carried their hatred to logical conclusions, and the theological criticisms of the Inquisition

were, however prejudiced, at least conclusive. Our criticism is, I thought, no less deadly in intention, and deprived of as equal efficacy only by a certain indecision in the executants. It is not so much, that, willing to wound, they are afraid to strike, as willing to strike they always appear to be locked out before they get their notices in.

Wherever I looked in the world of art I saw these savage recriminations and exultations. If I turned to painting I had the spectacle of rival academicians only prevented by the rules of their Institutes from excluding one another's canvases. In music, name after name, and theory after theory that had formed the staple of my youth were being publicly disinfected like sewage. In literature—prose and verse—there was in progress a continuous witch-hunt. Little groups were constantly smelling out individual books and authors. They discovered the stigmata, and one more wretched novel, poem, novelist and author was ducked or burned. On the next day it might and did happen that members of the hunting party were accusing and persecuting each other. It seemed that there were but three good men alive in England, and of these two were probably dead or would be as soon as Mr. Richards of Cambridge got round to them. And while the prophets stoned one another—instead of waiting for the enemy to stone them—outside in an angry and hysterical world all the things for which prophecy—never mind of what kind—stood were being systematically and ruthlessly destroyed. Coloured shirts and discoloured dungarees trampled all things of the spirit in the mud, and meantime their custodians could find no better occupation than that of slitting one another's throats. It seemed to me, as I lay ill, paradoxical.

Well, I asked myself, what exactly are these people at? It reminded me—since I was, in fact, reading the book—of a superb passage in *South Wind*—that book by Norman

Douglas of which I shall have more to say presently. At the Alpha and Omega Club on Nepenthe during a Cimmerian fall of volcanic ash a venerable toper of Anacreontic youthfulness is instructing a young Scandinavian Professor on the method of drawing a map of Trinidad. "To get an idea of that place," said Charlie, "you must take a banana, for instance, and cut it in half, and that in half again, and that in half again—the banana, mind you, must always remain the same size." The banana, mind you, always the same size, and meantime knife after knife slashes, feet tramp the sections into the earth, and the world seeing the tiny indistinguishable fragment held aloft in triumph like the remnant of the Westminster pancake, shrugs its shoulders and gets on with Fascism, Communism or devotion to the Ten Commandments, brought down brand-new and always different, every Sunday in response to the instructions of Lords Beaverbrook and Rothermere.

It seemed to me, I mean, that those occupied with ideas who have therefore the greatest difficulty in being heard at all times, were now ensuring non-receptivity first by shouting each other down, and then by insisting on audiences of the congenitally deaf. What ails them? I asked myself helplessly. I thought, for example, of the history of hatreds in verse. I remembered the deification and the subsequent total rejection of Stephen Phillips. Hysterical no doubt the praise at the beginning though there are still—and there will always be—those who will feel a stir in the blood as they hear the opening lines:

> "Wounded with beauty in the summer night
> Young Idas leaned upon his couch and cried
> 'Marpessa, O Marpessa'."

Hysterical, I say, those who compared Phillips to all the fixed stars and even named a new constellation in Lyra after

him. But was the poet to blame that they so over-rated him? Surely, I thought, Stephen Phillips wrote as he could and the best that he could. If they threw him laurels, so much the better, but was he a criminal because that which once pleased excessively, pleased no longer? He had done what he could. Why does the mob of critics, that once exalted, hound him to the marshes? It must, it would appear, be a noteworthy misdemeanour to have fooled the world for a moment into accepting an unreal beauty. Unreal—well, what reality is to be erected in its place? The poor Yellow Nineties had as loudly as their fluted voice would permit upbraided reality. Pierrots of the minute, with what brave pallor they snapped a midnight string outside the sleeping house of bourgeois rectitude. All was snug—even frowsty—within, and nothing interrupted the plucking of a random chord except through an open window a contented snore. Or elsewhere perhaps in attics surrounded by willow-pattern plate Arthur Symons and his peers were with frenzied eagerness describing the lives of daughters of joy—those step-children of misery.

Well, it was all very gallant and very innocent, not least innocent when they were exchanging the lilies and languors of virtue for the roses and raptures of vice. What roses they were, bought fresh in Covent Garden, and trundled homewards on the morning bus to shock the bourgeois pattering city-wards. Botany is after all not so shocking a science. Why then after a little time were these amiable gardeners raised to a dizzy eminence of hatred not by the general, whom they sought to shock, but by the few whom they strove to educate and blandish? After Gilbert in Patience had crucified the simple wish to get rid of machine-made furniture and exposed it for the shameful circumstance it really was, long after Oscar Wilde had confirmed all those who knew that art was up to no good, and even when it might have seemed that

a few lovelinesses might have been permitted to take their small complete place by the side of the magic luminaries, the vitriol-throwers arrived. "Romantic," they murmured one to another in a scarce audible undertone, so horrible, so unnatural seemed the accusation. "Dare we not actually say romantic?" They dared actually to say so and poor Ernest Dowson was picked out of his grave in order to be rearranged for the purpose of posthumous crucifixion.

But what was to be the substitute, the new god to occupy the ruined altar? Two names trembled on the dubious horizon, those of W. B. Yeats and Walter de la Mare. Unlike in anything else they had the common quality of the power to escape question. However fine the meshes their meaning stepped through them. In vain W. B. Yeats paltered with a metaphysic, which he could not understand. His verse, wiser than his intellectual ambition, threw the tiny fishes of thought back into the waters, and hoisted sail for the Blessed Islands, having no catch except the sunset entangled in rhythm's misty trawls. And de la Mare did not even pretend to the processes of thought. "Is there anybody here?" said the traveller. It was a safe question. There was no one there. The dark leaf drooped, flaked the black splendour in the door, the spider sowed her faint tapestries. Is there anybody here? said the traveller. No one—world without beginning and without end. So a bodiless music, a heartless spell enraptured the drowsy wind. The traveller's horse curved a hoof, clattered it on the moss-rich cobble, and so turned into a night soft and long as hair about the dreaming musician's shoulders. There is nobody there, said the traveller.

These two were more difficult to dispossess. Indeed, nothing short of the Nobel prize could finally teach the Irishman that nothing exceeds like success. The preachers of herd-unconsciousness and unherd-melodies had their cue.

" Praise his latest work," they agreed at a hastily summoned convention. " That will learn him." It did. And as to de la Mare, he died like a flower of the weight of his own loveliness. So slender a cobweb he seemed that they did not even need to brush him off the looking-glass in which they beheld their own faces looking like the brilliant girders of an incipient sky-scraper. They could have almost found it in the metal reticulation with a zip fastener that served for their hearts to pity him.

And meantime, to mark, or perhaps to disfigure, time, there were the Georgians. (And here a moment of silence is requested while the name of D. H. Lawrence is mentioned. It will be indicated presently that though Mr. Marsh succeeded in including him in his anthologies, he leaves the Court without a stain on his hieroglyphic character.) Here was an alternative to Rudyard Kipling. This uncomfortable performer had given verse a currency that it had not enjoyed since the period of the Border Ballads. Critics can forgive poets every fault, except the rarest of all—popularity. Let us be just and admit that this is one that they have to censure perhaps twice in a generation. But it may be taken for granted that any poem which commends itself to an audience of more than five is odious beyond all whooping. Justly did Mr. Max Beerbohm represent Mr. Kipling as spending a day in 'Ampstead 'Eath with Britannia his gal, she wearing his bowler and he her helmet. Kipling's dominion over palm and pine obviously suggested thimble-rigging and the three-card trick. In vain he wrote :

" Valour and innocence
Have latterly gone hence
To certain death by certain shame attended
Envy ah ! even to tears
The fortune of their years
Which though so few yet so divinely ended."

In vain he traced the lost road through the wood or celebrated the brevity of the daffodil with an accent as authentic as that of Herrick. Kipling had introduced poetry where hitherto only the advertising matter of the Gas Mantle Users' Gazette had penetrated. A clear case, it seemed, for the administration of insulin.

Nor could Masefield altogether escape a similar, though not as universal, an accusation. As long as he jogged on with "A Tarpaulin Muster"—if that indeed was the name of a book of verse, he gave little offence. Like the triremes going down to Nineveh—as long as nobody noticed—they were as respectable as Q ships in the war. But presently when Austen Harrison—a remarkable impresario—produced for the first time on any stage and at any stage in the *English Review* "The Everlasting Mercy," a perfectly absurd thing occurred. It is, of course, common knowledge that monthly magazines are cold-blooded organisms, by which I mean, that they have no circulation. The number of the *English Review* in which "The Everlasting Mercy" appeared ran into two editions. Once again there was a grave risk of poetry being read—a risk rendered no less real by the subsequent appearance of "The Widow in the Bye Street" and "Dauber." The critics knew what to think. They had their simple test. They practised what the American advertisers call sales-resistance. They resisted Masefield and his sales with complete success.

We come then—omitting Lawrence, but making the necessary obeisance while doing so—to the Georgians. For a little while it seemed that romance had returned—and actually without apology. Rupert Brooke at Cambridge and Flecker at Oxford occupied themselves with the traditional objects of the poet in no untraditional manner. There rose by the same smell—it seemed—no less sweetly, sickle moons and old

ships connived again in some predestined conspiracy—and what was even odder, both these poets died like the swan. Brooke on his Greek island and Flecker not far from the enfolding hills sped out

> " To seas
> West of these,
> Colder than the Hebrides
> Where the fleet of stars is anchored and the young
> Star-captains glow."

But these " fortunati opportunitate mortis " were only two in the resurgence. Harold Monro, Freeman, Lascelles, Abercrombie, Edward Shanks and J. C. Squire—these in the years preceding the war threatened or promised the arrival of a School. For a short time till the war shot down their defences this group brilliantly held the field. They had a corporate existence. Their work had a common aim, sometimes an identical subject. They did not haunt the purlieus of Alsatia like the Nineties. They did not dream of women with hair like cruel grapes and of men with the pale sharp face of a wicked King of Spades. Nor did they listen to the horns of elfland. The horns for them were the incipient cacophony of the motor-car that carried them off to the week-end cottage and the cricket-field. They were not afraid of normal things —mugs of beer, milk-pails or the long history of birds: they were ready for all of them. They were objective poets. They fastened upon the things under their eyes and not infrequently they held them on the page. They had, however, the double misfortune of interesting neither the god of war nor Mr. T. S. Eliot. They might have survived the first, they could not hope to survive the second tragedy.

For a time like a succession of Andrew Lang's fairy-tales, a different-coloured volume of Georgian verse appeared annually, and each year gratified the most advanced poetic taste. To be included was to be a Royal Academician or at

least an Associate. It seemed that a hierarchy as invulnerable as that of Tennyson–Browning had emerged. But no! Within a few brief years they had been blown upon the wind with eager contumely. The assault was not delivered by the war poets. These were content to attack war—possibly a more suitable objective than their brother poets. They were denounced from two quarters with increasing rage and contempt. On the one hand, Mr. Ezra Pound's Imagists volleyed and fired. On the other, the Sitwell family half-volleyed and back-fired. The unhappy group were the Menshevists of the hour. With their false stability, it seemed, they were endangering the Revolution—and what was more and worse, occupying all the places of profit and distinction. The machine guns of ridicule were turned upon them. They were pilloried—and presently they were ignored except for a casual taunt—under the grim shadow of Lawrence—a revolutionary vowed not to destroy, but to build, the Bastille for the soul of man.

Hardly had the Imagists and the Sitwells disposed of the Georgians when with a blind rush Lawrence and the Transatlantics were at hand. For a little while protests in the name of decency, of rhythm, even of sense feebly opposed the rush. They were swept on one side, Mr. Eliot, Mr. Ransom, Mr. Mark Crane, Mr. Tate and once again Mr. Ezra Pound with the powerful aid of Mr. Robert Graves and Miss Laura Riding had disposed of the pretensions of the Imagists. The Imagists after all treated words as a sort of bourgeoisie with a franchise and a duly elected parliament. Now for the rule of the proletariat, when every word, whether meaningless or not, whether fitted for its job or unfit, should exercise its undoubted right not only to its own freedom but to interfere with everybody else's. It seemed for the moment at any rate that even Mr. Richards must be satisfied. Significance was piled upon the merest preposition till, like Cleopatra, it not

merely beggared description but made meaning a fraudulent bankrupt. What more?

Even now I perceive strong whispers of something further. Mr. Roberts and his new signatures are putting their hands to some oddly blank cheques. There is, for example, *The Orators*—a much-praised book of verse written as to a large part in prose and mathematical symbols. Then there is the work of M. Perse in France, who writes a complete book in chapter headings only—and then leaves out the chapter headings.

At this point in my reflections it occurred to me that it might appear that I was myself joining heartily in the process of witch-hunting with this qualification only, that I attacked all movements equally. I might seem, I thought, considering what I had written, that, like all other post-war cravens, I was looking for some central authority which would instruct us not only how to criticise, but how to write. I ran a risk, I thought, of being one of those tired intellectuals who were waiting for a person, in the appropriate nursery uniform, to tell me my bed-time story, or alternatively to put me to bed uncomforted and supperless. Was it not suggesting that the cure for this hopeless inflated currency was the establishment of a rentenmark bearing the Swastika as a token of stability, or alternatively the abolition of money altogether? In other words, did not the absurdities upon which I brooded point straight to a spiritual dictatorship? Must we not rewrite the old saying to read, "I do not care who makes a nation's songs, provided that I may dictate its laws of prosody"?

I will admit that this is not the conclusion which I had reached, and I would add further that the picture I have given of the various groups of poets is not mine, but an attempt to reconstruct history. Believe me, had I the making, and not merely the writing, of events, they should have been different.

As it is, I merely record that literary changes and animosities have in these last years returned to the bitterness of the conflicts which precipitated Dryden's attack on Shadwell and Pope's secular loss of temper in *The Dunciad.* I record this fact and I ask myself what it portends.

Does it mean, I begin by asking, that artistic integrity has reached a point almost saintlike? Are we to suppose that when the Leavis family of Cambridge and the Marx brothers of America maul reputation after reputation with the slow ripping tear of rent linen that they are inspired with a fanatical devotion to the true light? Are they, as it were, the inmates of poetry's Little Bethel, to whom it has been revealed that in them alone is salvation, while all the worshippers at all other shrines are damned? But if this be the explanation, I wondered, why the feverish denunciations, the shrill bursts of laughter—which leave a little black foam at the side of the mouth? What need of such tempestuous loathing? After all, the faith is not being attacked. On the contrary, it is the infidels who are in the pillory and in danger of having their ears clipped. Isn't, after all, this display of assurance and anger a little intemperate? Isn't it all extraordinarily Roundhead and psalm-singing? Isn't it the cold voice in barren conventicles not seeking but denouncing all beauty as a carnal snare? Isn't it the Pilgrim Fathers, isn't it Boston, isn't it New England, isn't it Fundamentalism, and Dayton Ohio, isn't it, in a phrase, Professor Babbitt in the cast-off clothes of Oliver Cromwell denouncing the Pope of beauty, sacking the abbeys and in the name of religion dismembering vein by vein the objects of faith? And in any case isn't it all a dreadful exhibition of bad manners, self-importance and a complete lack of humour?

A complete lack of humour! Earlier in this paper I have mentioned two things. The august and lean name of D. H.

Lawrence and the happy pagan whisper where the light wave laps Capri of Norman Douglas, the author of that immortal work *South Wind*. Let us for a moment have a glimpse of our two contrasted types. Lawrence is the Old Testament. He has the violence, the aridity, the smashing hugeness of that most unbalanced and surprising book. He looks neither to the right nor to the left. He has been in the Mountain. He has come back with the Tables of the Law. They are short, bitter and abominable. And if the bourgeois youngest son returns from his stay repentant, he will find no indulgent father killing the fatted calf. No ! he will discover a stringy-throated prophet smashing the Golden Calf. Above all no sense of proportion, he thunders, "—everything too much." And meanwhile the poor little bourgeois whom he incessantly flagellates, creep humbly to his feet. " Hit us again," they beg. He hits them again.

Now let us envisage Norman Douglas. We cannot do better than ask Count Caloveglia of *South Wind* to help us. " That a man should wear himself to the bones in the acquisition of material gain is not pretty. . . . He must become strenuous if he wishes to rise superior to his inhospitable surroundings." " We think a good deal of strenuousness," objected the bishop. " Have you not noticed that whenever anything, however fantastic is imposed upon men by physical forces, they straightway make a god of it ? That is why you deify strenuousness. . . . The Eskimo doubtless deifies seal-blubber ; he could not survive without it. Yet nobody would be an Eskimo if he had a chance of bettering his condition. By all means let us take life seriously. But let us be serious about things that matter."

But how wrong, it seems, is Count Caloveglia to deprecate the glory of being an Eskimo. The Eskimo is the absolute return to the primitive, the descent into the loins of darkness

so habitually advocated by D. H. Lawrence. Who would not be an Eskimo if he had the chance? Nobody, certainly, who is a true disciple of D. H. Lawrence. Now let us hear Mr. Keith on that savage and persecuting morality of which D. H. Lawrence was the apostle. "All morality is a generalisation, and all generalisations are tedious. Why should I plague myself with what is tedious? Altogether the question that confronts me is not whether morality is worth talking about, but whether it's worth laughing about." Laughter, you see, creeps in. We are permitted by this code to expand our lungs. We are not for ever proceeding in black clothes through a mining village grimly despising the middle classes. And finally let us have the author's own view on art. "There resides, for example, in Hellenic sculpture a certain ingredient —what shall we call it? Let us call it the factor of strangeness, of mystery. It is a vague emanation which radiates from such works of art and gives us a sense of universal applicability to all our changing moods and passions. . . . They speak to us at all seasons in some loving and yet enigmatical language." Loving and enigmatical—and possessing authority. This is how art should be.

What then becomes of our picture of Norman Douglas? Not strenuous, it seems, not a devotee of seal-blubber in the mass, not Hell-bound by the inherited terrors of a gloomy Calvinistic faith, but in matters of beauty asking for things "fair and eternal"—asking but not demanding, and ready to tolerate everything in the world except dictation to the spirit of beauty. And now let us read Norman Douglas upon D. H. Lawrence, whom he knew well and who, in his own way, he understood very clearly. This is what he says of him in *Looking Back*. "He has done good negatively, as a warning to thinkers and on occasion to writers: positively because his work is in the nature of a beneficent habit-shattering bomb.

An American friend tells me that Lawrence's romances have been of incalculable service to genteel society out there. The same applies to genteel society in England. Scholars and men of the world will not find much inspiration in these novels. Lawrence opened a little window for the bourgeoise. That was his life-work."

And why have I quoted all this, and why, apparently irrelevantly, have I introduced these two characters like the gentleman in the top hat at the end of Bernard Shaw's *Joan of Arc*? I will tell you why. It is because Norman Douglas' way of criticism seems to me the right way, and Norman Douglas' happy laughter the very stuff to blow away the trailing clouds of crêpe which all our critics come trailing.

Not that I pretend that Norman Douglas' estimate is right, or rather that it is complete. But it sets about the thing in the right and the complete way. There is not the howling Dervish earnestness, nor the extravagant humorlessness which carries dullness over the Styx and back again. There was, for example, a book recently published by a young writer who, having exhausted all the forms of self-confusion, resorted to the subject of the Cenci. A few—a very few—noticed the work. They were respectful, they lisped through the front of their teeth, they spoke of its courage, its delicacy. And, as Keith would say, what the young man wanted was something to open his pores. One moment of mellow laughter and puff! he would be honourably engaged in casting the figures in a ledger on a high stool—a task for which he was clearly designed by nature.

Laughter and a sense of proportion, that, I thought, is what we have lost. Somebody, now that the Poles are visited weekly and the Sumerian civilisation has been ransacked, may arise bold and resolute enough to head a search party. Salute to the adventurer!

RALPH JAMESON

Something You Belong To

Old Hugh Odell was over last night to see about the mortgage on the forest land. He said two things which added a little to an explanation which will never be complete. One was: "A Christian need never worry about anything," and the other was: "It was my son John who committed suicide two years ago, you know. Yes, that was two years ago." (It was over three really—it was at least two years ago that they found him, but Odell is getting old.) He said it much as he might have said: "It was two years ago that Congressman Fishman visited F——. He ate dinner at my house, you know." Or so it seemed to me. Perhaps I'm wronging him.

Helen and I met Odell two years before we had moved to F——, the summer that young John shot himself because, for some reason—for a lot of reasons, I guess—he simply couldn't stand being John Odell any longer. We had come up from Boston to spend the fourth of July week-end at Mavis Mackenzie's place, where you can stand on a high crag and see the whole Atlantic Ocean and, turning your back to it, look into the solid wall of the forest. It's a little frightening if you're an inlander. The ocean frightens you when you

can see as much of it as that, and, however much you turn away from it and look at the trees to get your sense of security back, the water seems to keep pulling at your shoulders from behind, and you long for Wisconsin.

Nevertheless, it is unutterably beautiful, water and land and sky coming together in their immensity like that. Helen and I were completely taken by it. We had never seen a place like it until we had come to this out-of-the-way spot on the New England coast—not built up with resorts and houses which cost a fortune, but filled with country people and backed inland by villages where the only thing you could do on Sunday was go to church.

Helen and I were homesick for the Wisconsin trees, and there were plenty of trees around here, even though they all looked small after the pines and maples and oaks of Forest County, so we started to walk the mountain road, inland and up the mountain, to find a place that we could buy at a small price, having decided that, since Mavis had found one, perhaps we could. The road got steeper and rougher, and the forest deeper and deeper. We walked clear over the mountain and started down a little on the other side, with the crest at our backs and the sea shut out by the trees.

Then we found it. There was no " For Sale " sign on it anywhere, just a tumble-down abandoned house and barn and sheds, old apple trees, the leaves of which had been badly eaten by tent caterpillars that summer, and a place on the road where you could count seventeen mountain tops, and great rocks, and steep, inaccessible places, and second-growth timber and thicket over everything, and no inhabited building in sight anywhere. Standing there we were quite alone. There might not have been any other human being in the world. There had been someone once, to build the

ramshackle house and barn we saw, and to plant the apple trees, but that had obviously been a long time before.

I love being with my wife and was happy about having found this place with her, but for a moment I wished that she wasn't there. There was something to be got hold of, something you might learn if you could be alone with it long enough, maybe an explanation you had always wanted, something which, if you got it, would keep you from needing anything else.

I know what my father would have said about it. He would have covered his embarrassment at such magnitude of beauty by saying, "It makes you feel close to God." I wouldn't say it that way, because every time you say "God" you may mean one thing and everyone who hears you may think you mean something else. But I know when I looked at the mountain tops, some of them a great distance away, with the green carpet made of the tops of trees, and the great grey rocks between them and me, I felt closer to where something in me I don't know anything about came from than I'd ever felt before. I had one of those strange, fleeting moments which tell you, without any clear thought, what you're made of and how, some day, you've got to go back to it.

And it seems suddenly all right, restful and grand, not at all horrible. It doesn't make you want to go back any sooner than your time, but it gives you a deep feeling that when you have to go, you won't mind as you've always thought you would. You'll be going back to something you belong to, whether you'll know it after you get there or not. And it seems all right.

We walked on another two miles down the mountain and found the nearest neighbour, who told us that Jim Nind owned the place and that he lived at F——. So when we got back to Boston the next night we wrote James Nind at

F——. We got a letter back in a few days from Hugh Odell, a lawyer, who represented Jim Nind and who owned the place on the mountain next to Jim's.

We went to F—— the next day and found Odell a nice old man (sweet, Helen called him), on towards seventy. I would have said he was a bit doddering and pedantic, but kindly, obviously honest according to his lights, and well-meaning towards everyone. You knew that he would never say anything he thought was unkind, you knew that he would never take a bribe and, though he was running for a local political office, you knew that he would never buy a vote, not even with a cigar—least of all with a cigar. He was a deacon in the church, superintendent of the Sunday school and a man who was respected throughout the community.

We bought the place, but before we'd talked an hour with him he interrupted himself in the middle of a sentence and said, " You're from Boston. I'd like you to see this." He pulled from his desk a handbill which bore the legend " Missing " in large type, and a photograph of his son John, and a description of him.

It was a sensitive, beautiful face we saw, old for the boy's years, and with an enigma in the eyes—eyes that looked straight out of the picture at you and seemed alive. In the boy, as in his picture, you felt that they would never turn aside in order to evade yours. The lips were fine and firm—those two things about the face I shall always remember, the eyes and the lips. They marked a man you would want to know. I remember that, even before I heard the story, I felt a vague sense of personal loss at seeing the word " Missing " over John's face.

He had just finished his junior year at college when he became involved in a difficult affair there. The old man told

us of it in detail. The night before Commencement exercises John went to a party with some other boys, one of them a senior, a chap who lived in the same house with him and was a close friend of his. During the evening the senior said: "This lousy school thinks it's going to give me a diploma to-morrow, but I'm going to fool them. I've got a good joke to play on them. They won't give me a diploma because I'll be dead."

According to John (as his father told the story), they hadn't been drinking—probably a lie. Though it doesn't matter. A man is much less apt to kill himself when drunk than sober. There's less reason for it. John and the other chap walked back to the house together and John went to the other's room for awhile before going to his own and to bed. In the morning he went up to get the other fellow for breakfast and found him dead on the floor with a 22-calibre rifle beside him.

There was a long investigation. John having, by his own story, been the last to see the other boy alive and the first to see him dead, was held by the police for a few days but was never charged with murder. Both the police and the college completely exonerated him at last.

His father came to the college to take him home. While they were in Boston, John, of his own initiative, returned to his father $50 the old man had sent him a week before for spending money. (Old Hugh told this with pride, as evidence of how good and considerate the boy was, but I couldn't help wondering, as the story went on, whether the boy hadn't simply found it distasteful to take any of his father's money just then.)

Odell interpolated, as he told the story, bits about John's character and personality. He wasn't like the other boys. The others were working for law or engineering, or agriculture (one in each, as I remember it)—something useful and

constructive, but John wrote poetry for the school magazine and listened to music and worried about social wrongdoing—"talked like a socialist," his father said,—and wouldn't make up his mind about a profession.

He was timid, too—had never gone in for sports much, as the others had, and never mixed much with the boys of the town. Hugh smiled fondly and with obvious tolerance (but you could see that he didn't like it) when he told us, "He was always sort of his mother's pet."

It all seemed to fit with the peculiarly gentle beauty of the face on the handbill, a gentleness mixed with firmness of character, such as you see on the faces of many New England women.

"Sometimes," Odell went on apologetically, "I was afraid he was something of a coward. He always seemed to be afraid to get into things, and never rough-housed the way the other boys did."

That summer, after his friend had killed himself, John had planned to work on a newspaper in Boston, and had got a job there, but after the mess at college Odell insisted that he come home with him, so that the boy could be near his father and mother. He had arranged a place for his son on the local paper. So the boy went, dispiritedly enough I imagine, but probably not caring much just then.

For three days he worked on a dull little political sheet in a county seat in New England. On the fourth day, when old Hugh was going home for lunch, the editor of the paper stopped him and asked where John was, saying he hadn't appeared for work that day. Hugh said he didn't know, but that he'd find out when he got home.

"And another thing, Odell——" the editor paused impressively. "I thought you didn't allow your boys to smoke."

"None of my boys smoke," Odell assured him proudly.

"Well, John's smoking. I saw him out on the roof of your porch last night smoking cigarettes." (The editor lived right across the street from Odell and John's bedroom window opened on to the porch roof.) "I woke up several times and looked over, and he was always there, smoking cigarettes."

When Odell got home he found John hadn't been out of his room all morning. He went upstairs and found his son fully dressed, lying on a bed which had not been slept in.

"Why didn't you go to work this morning, John?" he said—sternly? or gently? No one can know, least of all Odell. But that was his memory of what he said.

"I can't work there, Father," the boy answered, pretty wearily, I imagine. "It's a lousy, rotten political sheet and the editor's a bastard. I can't write the stuff he tells me to write."

"Judge not that ye be not judged, John," his father said. "Why didn't you ask me about it before you decided not to go this morning?"

"How could I do that? You got me the job. You probably think he's all right. I just disagree, and didn't want a scene about it."

"And how about smoking, son? Have you been smoking?"

"Yes, sir."

"Do you think that's right?"

"I think it neither right nor wrong. You smoke, or you don't smoke, that's all."

"Why didn't you tell me you were smoking?"

"Why should I? I knew how you felt about it. I saw no sense in hurting you by telling you. I went out on the porch roof so you wouldn't know about it."

Odell told this naïvely and simply. I don't know whether he had any realisation at all of the self-accusation it all contained, and whether, in telling it, he was trying to justify himself (if he realised his lack at all), or whether he was taking satisfaction in airing his own righteousness and puritanism about such things, or whether it was simply a chronological narrative of events in which everything was told without realisation of the significance of any of it. I do know that he found a definite pleasure in the attention we gave the story.

He left the boy lying on his bed, with a final admonition against smoking cigarettes, and charging him at least to go and explain himself to the editor that afternoon. Then, having eaten a comfortable lunch, his duty well done, he went back to his office.

Half-an-hour later John came downstairs without hat or coat. His mother, hearing him and pretty worried about the whole business, I imagine, but not knowing what to do or say, went into the hall to meet him. John had started for the door, but he turned back when he saw his mother, went to her and kissed her, saying, " You know I love you, Mother."

Then he went out.

Later, when it was announced that he was missing, a friend reported having seen him walking along the road to a village six or seven miles away, between F—— and the mountain. His destination, as it turned out, was nearly twenty miles away, and he apparently walked it that afternoon, though no one can every know.

On the dresser in his room they found everything that had been in his pockets—change, knife, watch. He left with nothing but the barest essentials to cover his body, almost as he had come, without choice, into earthly being. He kept his signet ring on though.

There was no note, no explanation of any kind.

Odell finished his story with the expression of an opinion that his son was in Boston, "where he would like to be because of the literary group there," and would we keep our eyes open for him and send him home if we ran across him.

I'm not over sensitive about such things, but for days the hurt, lost look in the eyes I had seen on the handbill haunted me and I kept hearing over and over the direct, childlike words Odell had used in telling us the story. I kept wishing terribly that I might meet John, and there was a strange emotional quality in my wish which I could not understand. I thought of trying to find him, if he were still alive, which I doubted very much. I even wrote an advertisement addressed to him, but of course never ran it anywhere. I wanted to see him partly for my own sake. I wanted to know him. But I wanted, too, not to urge him to go back to his father, but to try to get him to relieve his tortured soul in speech, to try to tell him that his inability to live by his father's code was no disloyalty, no failure.

And that other boy at college—Lord knows what he had to do with it—something surely, if only by setting a precedent. Perhaps there had been a pact of some sort between them. Perhaps it was to him that John was feeling disloyal so long as he remained alive.

Bit by bit the spell of it worked off and I had put it all out of my mind when, a year later, Helen and I were spending a week in the old farmhouse on the mountain. A friend drove up to see us and arrived cursing and surly because of our terrible mountain road, and said he'd rot up there before he'd drive down it. So, when he was ready to go, I drove his car down the mountain for him, and Helen came along and we walked back up.

It's only five miles from the state road to our place, but the

road rises 1200 feet in that distance, so we stopped at Mavis Mackenzie's, about half-way up, to rest. We sat and talked with Mavis until it was quite dark (and up there, when there's no moon, it's so black where the road goes between the trees that you must feel your way along with your feet). As we got up to go Mavis said: "Isn't it terrible about the Odell boy?"

We asked what new thing had happened.

"Haven't you heard?" she asked in surprise. "They found him last week, before you came up, on your place."

He had apparently thought that he was on the place next to ours—the place owned by his father. Boundaries are more theoretical than actual there.

Some boys and a dog had been walking on the mountain and the dog kept running up to an almost inaccessible spot high in the rocks and barking and looking at the boys. Finally, one of them went up and found a human skeleton, sitting up, leaning against a tree. John Odell's shoes were over the bones of the feet—or what was left of the shoes was there—they were almost rotted away, and John Odell's signet ring on the middle finger bone of the left hand, and the finger bones of the right hand still around the butt of a revolver from which one bullet had been discharged, and a hole through the side of the bleached skull which had once housed the mind that couldn't decide about a profession, that thought poetry and listened to music, and was hurt by social wrongs, and made it impossible for its keeper to work for a crooked politician.

Helen and I were pretty silent the rest of the way up the black road to our house. John's presence seemed more real to me than the night or the mountain or the woods. He and his unexplained hurt seemed alive again, and I wanted to take him in my arms and try to comfort him.

The next morning I found the place where he had been. Helen thought I was being a little morbid when I started to go up there, but it was something else. I'd never been up there before, though it was, as Mavis had said, a part of our eighty acres. The climbing was the toughest I'd done. It had obviously not been meant for any human beings, given to human ways and still chained to human thoughts and impulses, ever to be there. I had again, but infinitely more, the feeling I had had the first day I had seen the seventeen mountain tops from a spot below, the feeling of belonging to something which was greater and more lasting and more comforting than anything we ordinarily associate with human life, something one could find the way back to, perhaps, when the time came, something it would be peaceful and comforting to greet.

I sat there for a long time and didn't feel sorry any more for the boy who had come there, maybe looking for something he had to have, some sure instinct guiding him to the place where he could find it. Looking at what he had seen there, seeing for myself from this eminence the beauty and serenity and order and peace which he had not been able to find in human life, what he did there lost suddenly the horrible name most people would give it. I believed that John had found there what he had needed so terribly, and I was calm about him and even a little glad for him, I think.

That's all of the story so far as John is concerned. There's a little more about old Hugh. He was over last night, as I've said, asking in his kindly, gentle way what we could do about the mortgage. He wouldn't let Jim foreclose, but Jim was getting a little impatient with us.

During the evening he talked about the complete breakdown of moral principle in people, how the wide vote for the repeal of prohibition was evidence of it and how, if only you could get the decent Christian people out to vote, repeal

would be impossible. And he talked about money and how poor we all were, and said, with complete assurance: "But a Christian need never worry about anything." Then there was that slightly difficult moment when Helen, trying to keep up a conversation, I guess, or to make him stop talking about repeal and things like that about which we had to lie in order not to be rude and show how we really felt, asked about his son.

"How's the boy who works with you in your office, Mr. Odell?" she asked. "His name's John, isn't it?"

I took it up quickly, before Odell had a chance to answer, trying to get Helen's eye.

"You mean Fred, dear," I said, then turned to Odell and asked, "How *is* Fred, Mr. Odell? He's a fine fellow."

Odell could easily have ignored the mention of John's name. It was all set for him. But instead he ignored the question about Fred and, turning to Helen, answered her.

"It was my son John who committed suicide, you know. Yes, that was two years ago." There was no trace of emotion in his voice, no embarrassment. It sounded even a little prideful, as though that fact gave him some distinction before us.

He left a few minutes later, quite cheerful and smiling his "a Christian need never worry" smile, but he was back in a moment. Would I come and crank his car for him? There was something wrong with the starter.

Our street is a fairly steep hill and his car was headed down it. So I just released the emergency brake of the car ahead of him and let it go forward a couple of feet so that he could slide his car out without backing and let it coast and start in gear. He hadn't been able to see that simple solution.

How *Anahareo had Her Way*

We introduce this month to our readers a personality who during the past few weeks has been attracting wide attention throughout England and the Empire. Wa-Sha-Quan-Asin, whose name means Grey Owl, is the son of a Scot and an Apache; has been a trapper, a guide, a sniper in the Canadian Army, and is now an officially-appointed Protector of Wild Life in a vast forest reserve in North-Western Canada.

The excerpt from his book [Pilgrims of the Wild *] *which we are privileged to publish below tells how his wife Anahareo, daughter of a long line of Ojibway chiefs, persuaded him, after he had killed a mother beaver, to save the two kitten beavers. They take them back to their shack, and with this incident begins the long and beautiful story of Grey Owl's and Anahareo's pilgrimage to find somehow, somewhere, a sanctuary for the last survivors of the Little People, as the beavers are called by the Indians.*

THE hunting ground we were working had been previously trapped over by a noted hunter the winter before, and between that and the low prices we only took fur to the value of about six hundred dollars; not a great sum in comparison

* *Pilgrims of the Wild.* Grey Owl. [Lovat Dickson]. 12*s.* 6*d.*

to what I had been in the habit of making during the boom years. There would be little left over after the debt was settled and a summer's provisions purchased, not enough to start out in pursuit of that will-o'-the wisp, the virgin, untapped hunting ground that every trapper sees visions of, gets reports about, sees on maps, but never quite catches up to. So I decided on a spring hunt to replenish the exchequer, something that went a little against even my principles, as a hunt at that time of the year was looked on as both destructive and cruel by the better class of trapper. But there was a family of beaver remaining over from the organised slaughter of the year before, and like too many of my kind, I salved my conscience by saying that I may as well clean them out before someone else stepped in and took them.

Delayed over a week at the post by the late arrival of a buyer, and more time being consumed by the journey in, we did not arrive back at our ground until the last of May. The hunt should have been over by now, and I was a little disturbed over the hardship I could not now avoid inflicting, as the young beaver were most certainly born by now, and would perish after the old ones were removed. This proved to be the case. Whilst making a set at an old, renovated beaver house where I knew the female to be, I heard faintly the thin piping voices of kitten beavers. In apparent clumsiness, I allowed my paddle to drop with a rattle on the canoe gunwale with the intention of hiding the sound, but Anahareo had heard it and begged me to lift the trap and allow the baby beaver to have their mother and live. I felt a momentary pang myself, as I had never before killed a beaver at this time on that account, but continued with my work. We needed the money.

The next morning I lifted the bodies of three drowned beaver. The mother was missing, however, one trap being

unaccounted for. I found where the chain had been broken, and dragged for the body unsuccessfully, later breaking the dam and partly draining the pond, but without avail. She would be the largest and most valuable, so I bemoaned my loss and forgot the life that had been destroyed for nothing, and the helpless kittens left to starve. After a whole day spent in a fruitless search, I removed all traps and equipment and proceeded to camp, having no intention whatever of returning; but the next day, after skinning and stretching the catch, for no reason at all I changed my mind. So inauspiciously do important events intrude themselves into our lives. I portaged back to the ruined pond that would never again be good for anything, and we paddled over to the old beaver house in an effort to discover if the female had succeeded in getting back there, but could find no indication either by sight or sound of her presence.

So we turned to go, finally and for good. As we were leaving I heard behind me a light splash, and looking back saw what appeared to be a muskrat lying on top of the water alongside of the house. Determined to make this wasted day pay, I threw up my gun, and standing up in the canoe to get a better aim, prepared to shoot. At that distance a man could never miss, and my finger was about to press the trigger when the creature gave a low cry, and at the same instant I saw, right in my line of fire, another who gave out the same peculiar call. They could both be got with the one charge of shot. They gave voice again, and this time the sound was unmistakable—they were young beaver! I lowered my gun and said:

"There are your kittens."

The instinct of a woman spoke out at once.

"Let us save them," cried Anahareo excitedly, and then in a lower voice, "It is up to us, after what we've done."

And truly what had been done here looked now to be an act of brutal savagery. And with some confused thought of giving back what I had taken, some dim idea of atonement, I answered :

" Yes; we have to. Let's take them home." It seemed the only fitting thing to do.

This was not such an easy matter, as the kittens were well able to take care of themselves in the water, being older than I had thought. By the exercise of considerable patience and ingenuity we eventually caught them, and dropped them aboard, two funny-looking furry creatures with little scaly tails and exaggerated hind feet that weighed less than half a pound apiece, and that tramped sedately up and down the bottom of the canoe with that steady, persistent, purposeful walk that we were later to know so well. We looked at them in a kind of dumbfounded bewilderment, feeling much as if we had caught a pair of white elephants, hardly knowing what to do with them. And certainly we had not the faintest inkling of the far-reaching effects their unceremonious entry into our affairs was to have.

Had my finger pressed but lightly on the trigger that fateful morning, these two tiny creatures, whose coming saved from slaughter so many of their kin who followed them and materially changed the lives of several people, would have passed like two wisps from some wandering breeze, back into the Great Unknown from which they had so short a time before set out.

It is only fair to say that at the time we did not know what we were letting ourselves in for. From the very commencement it was plain that this experiment was to be no picnic. Any preconceived ideas either of us had on the raising and handling of pets had to be radically changed. These

were no cringing terror-stricken wild things with feral eyes that cowered fearfully in dark corners, but a pair of very wide-awake, aggressive personalities, who fastened themselves on us as their protectors. They gave themselves completely into our hands, and proceeded to levy unceasing demands on our attention. They allowed us at no time to forget the responsibilities that we had incurred, and before long they had us trained to sleep with one eye open and one hand on the milk-can. Feeding them was a problem. They would not drink the diluted milk out of a dish, and having no feeding bottle we conceived the idea of loading a slim twig with the sweet milk out of the can, closing the beaver's mouth over it with our fingers, and pulling out the stick. Masticating this sticky mass kept them interested for long periods at a time, and they did not need much of it, so this scheme simplified matters considerably. They were very gentle, and they had a kind of naïve disarming friendliness of disposition that took it quite for granted that they belonged, and that we were well disposed towards them and would see them through.

After feeding times they desired to be picked up and fondled and it was not long before they made this a regular habit, falling asleep in odd places such as the inside of an open shirt, half-way up a sleeve, or draped around a person's neck. Should they be removed from these places they would immediately awaken and return in the most determined manner, and if placed in their box they awoke at once, and with piercing outcries demanded to be again taken up, grasping our hands and lifting themselves up by means of them. If their cries were disregarded they would eventually lapse into unconsciousness, but the passage near the box of either one of us restored them to immediate and vociferous wakefulness. They soon got to know our voices, and would answer con-

certedly with loud exclamations when spoken to. We allowed them to roam around the tent at will, and occasionally on their rambles they would become lost and parted. Their bold self-confidence would then quickly desert them, and they became lonely and would call frantically for help, and on being placed together they would throw themselves on their backs with wiggles and squeals of joy, and lie down together holding tightly on to each other's fur. Often as they lay sleeping we would speak to them for the fun of having them awaken and answer us, which they invariably did, in their shrill childish treble. Should this, however, occur too often they would become very impatient and express their annoyance in no uncertain terms. Their voices were really the most remarkable thing about them, much resembling the cries of a human infant, without the volume but with a greater variety of expression, and at all hours of the day and night there was liable to be some kind of a new sound issuing from the interior of the box. The best known and easiest to recognise of these was the loud, long and very insistent call for lunch, which chorus broke out about every two hours.

These whimsical little creatures early showed evidence of qualities and capabilities that at once arrested our attention and it was not long before our diminutive charges became attached to us, and, I am free to confess, we to them. Each had a special liking for one of us, and continued faithful to his choice. They lavished this affection on us in a number of curious ways, such as upsetting the box, as soon as they were big enough to do so, and rushing out at us as we passed, or creeping into our blankets at night and cuddling up to us. They would generally lie on our bodies, one on each of us, the favoured position being a rather inconvenient one across the throat. If alarmed whilst out and around, they would

come gliding along belly to the ground, each to his chosen friend, and sit quietly as two mice until the supposed danger had passed.

They were continually escaping, and the first few times this happened we hunted for them high and low, feeling ourselves pretty smart to ferret out two such small objects from the underbrush. But our anxiety and subsequent gratification were both quite unnecessary, as we discovered that on hearing us in the brush they would run towards us of their own accord. On this account we became over-confident, and one morning, having failed to close the box before retiring, we awoke to find their chamber empty, and no sign of a beaver any place in the tent. A prolonged and wide search failed to locate the wanderers. We hunted all that day both by canoe and on land, and remained out all night, going back to the tent ever so often in the somewhat vain expectation that they might have returned in the meantime. It seemed hard to believe that they would desert us like that, attached to us as they seemed to be, but after all they were wild animals, they were well able to travel and feed themselves, and could now probably get along without us. We felt a little hurt about it. Maybe, too, they could not return; there were plenty of hawks and owls, and an otter would make short work of them. Realising at last that they had been gone over thirty hours, and that if living they would now be far beyond our reach, we gave up the search and went home to get some sleep, not a little sad—and there in the tent, all unconscious of the excitement of which they were the cause, sat the two deserters on the bed, soaking wet, and squeezing the water out of their coats on to the blankets.

After this experience we simply pitched our camp near any old lake, and with due regard for predatory birds and beasts, we let them come and go as they pleased. They would walk

down to the lake with that methodical step of theirs, bathe, swim, and play in the reeds awhile and return, plodding solemnly up and down the water trail together, like two little old men out for a constitutional. They were good housekeepers too. By this time they were beyond the milk stage, and to supplement their natural diet we fed them once a day on porridge and each had his dish, which when empty was pushed over to the side of the tent, and the instinct for stacking used material as far out of the way as possible caused them to try and rear the plates against the wall. This was not easy to do, but they persisted at it and very often succeeded.

At three months of age they ceased to be of any further trouble to us save for the daily feed of porridge, an insatiable and very active curiosity regarding the contents of provision bags and boxes, the frequent desire for petting that seemed to fill some great want in their lives, and the habit they had of coming into our beds, soaking wet, at all hours of the night.

They were scrupulously clean, were gentle and good-natured, they gave out no odour whatever, and were altogether the best conducted pair of little people one could wish to live with. They were very self-effacing, and a good deal of the time were neither to be seen nor heard; but always there came moments, generally about sundown, when they seemed to feel the need of some attention, and getting to know of this we made a point of giving it to them. And they would give little bleats and play with our hands, nibble our finger-tips and climb on us, so far as climbing was possible to them, with many absurd but genuine evidences of real affection.

This desire to be made much of, the appeal in their voices, the habit they had of playing with a lock of hair, a button or a buckskin fringe, made them seem very childlike to us. These mushy spells did not as a rule last very long, and soon

satisfied they would go about their business and perhaps not show up till daylight, weary, wet and very sleepy.

That Anahareo should become devoted if not actually addicted to them is not at all remarkable; but my own attitude towards them was something quite beyond my expectations, and was even likely to have a compromising effect on our chief means of livelihood—the beaver hunt. I wondered at times if it was quite manly to feel as I did towards these small beasts. But I was able to call to my rescue the recollection of an ugly pock-marked Indian, a huge, evil-appearing man I had always disliked, but who spent a whole day in the rain searching for a young beaver he had lost; and when he recovered it, he came home in the pouring rain in his shirt-sleeves carrying the shivering little creature wrapped up in his coat. Yet another had shot a good lead-dog for killing a beaver he had kept for two years as a pet. Evidently the little devils had a way of working on a person's sympathies, and at the commencement I was a little sly and furtive about them when Anahareo was around. Their utter dependence on our good-will claimed all of any chivalry we had. Their little sneezes and childish coughs, their little whimpers and small appealing noises of affection, their instant and pathetically eager response to any kindness, their tiny clinging hand-like forepaws, their sometimes impatiently stamping feet, and their little bursts of independence, all seemed to touch a chord of tenderness for the small and helpless that lies dormant in every human heart. Riotously happy for the most part, they were at odd times subject to fits of peevishness and irritation, during which they quarrelled and slapped at one another and at us, but these moods were of short duration and were, we found, the result of improper feeding, which was later to have more serious results. Their hands—one can call them nothing else—were nearly as effect-

ive as our own more perfect members would be, in the uses they were put to. They could pick up very small objects with them, manipulate sticks and stones, strike, push, and heave with them, and they had a very firm grasp which it was difficult to disengage. When peeling a stick they used them both to twist the stem with supple wrist movements, while the teeth rapidly whittled off the succulent bark as it went by, much after the fashion of a lathe.

They were greedy little fellows and were constantly trying to steal from one another. These attempts, however, were never very serious, and seldom were successful, as the owner of the stick was always well prepared, and on the approach of his companion, welcome enough at all other times, he would set up a vigorous vocal protest which continued long after the object of them had given up all thought of plunder. They would none the less allow us to approach and handle them freely whilst eating, without any complaint, but if we attempted to lay hold of their wooden sandwich they would let out a sharp ejaculation or two, and promptly turn their backs on us.

Should we be away up the lake for any length of time, we would, on our return, call them whilst yet some distance away, and they would come to meet the canoe, answering the call with long high-pitched cries, and on close approach would reach up to us with outstretched hands in eager expectancy, grasping our fingers and looking up at us and making the most uncommon sounds. For we always made it a practice to bring along little bits of sweet things we made for them, and they would lie in the water eating them with loud enjoyment and a very audible smacking of lips. This usage gave us nearly as much pleasure as it gave to them, the more especially when we found that whether satisfied or not they did not leave us, but would try to get aboard the canoe, and

on being lifted in, the tail providing a very convenient handle for the purpose, they would clamber over our persons with every sign of pleasure. And if the treats in any way improved the welcome we received, show me the very good friend whose heart is not the warmer towards you when you set him at your table!

Yet, on reflection, it struck me as passing strange that we, representatives of two tribes who, above all others, had each in their day made the war-trail a thing of horror (an art, by the way, in which the whole world is at present busy in perfecting itself), should be wearing ourselves to a frazzle over the likes and dislikes of two miserable little creatures that were not, according to civilised standards, worth the powder to blow them to hell.

Towards the middle of summer it became necessary to go out to the railroad to confer with others of my calling on the possibilities of the coming winter. On this journey, whilst in the canoe, we let the beaver run loose as they were not able to climb out of it. On the portages they were dumped into a grain bag and dangled from a thwart of the inverted canoe. One of these carries was two miles in length, and they cried the whole way while mosquitoes settled on the bag in swarms. Having no longer a box, at camping grounds we hung them up in the bag near a fire to keep the mosquitoes from them, so they were at times pretty well smoked. They slept nearly all the time and ate nothing, but arrived in fair shape except that they were a little groggy. An Indian who came to see them said they were dying, but an hour or two in the water restored them. It was now necessary to confine them both day and night, owing to the presence of a multitude of idle sleigh dogs that formed the larger part of the population of the village. They expressed their disapprobation of this treatment by promptly eating their way out of everything we

tried to keep them in, so that they had me busy providing boxes which lasted, if they were good, one night.

Another trip had yet to be made to the trapping camp for some equipment that remained there, so we left the beaver in care of a friend who locked them carefully into an outhouse built of logs. We returned a few days later with our load, and as soon as we disembarked Anahareo went to visit the beaver, whilst I crossed immediately over to the store to obtain a good strong box, as we expected to board a train that evening. I was met on my way back by a pale and distraught Anahareo. . . . The beaver were gone! They had eaten through the timbers at the thin place where two logs rested one on the other, and gone on a tour. Our friend was greatly disturbed at their loss, knowing how we prized them. He muzzled a beaver dog, an animal especially trained to hunt them, and set out to trail them down. I commenced to comb the surrounding woods, covering the ground in the direction of the lake, which was some considerable distance away. The beaver had not been gone long, and could, under ordinary circumstances, have been easily recovered; the danger was grave only on account of the huskies, of which there were dozens, and cheap-skate hunters who would kill anything on sight.

We were not long away before one of the beaver, the female, showed up in the yard, and when seen was picking her way nonchalantly amongst several dogs, some of whom were commencing to circle warily behind her. With a shout and a wild leap Anahareo threw herself between them, and grabbing up the startled beaver ran for the nearest door, pursued by the enemy. This I learned on my return from an unsuccessful search. And when the hunting dog returned and was found to have also failed,[1] we, Anahareo and I, looked

[1] The very young of most animals, as a protection against predatory beasts, are odourless.

at one another silently and with one common thought—the little male, whose curiosity and wandering habits had got him into hot water continually, had made just one trip too many. The big strong box looked pretty large and empty with one small lonely kitten beaver crouched unhappily in a corner of it. They had never been apart more than a few minutes all their short lives, and this one was wailing querulously in the way they had when lonesome or in some trouble.

I hunted all evening without avail. The train we were to have taken passed on without us, and it would very soon be dark. The place was swarming with huskies, hunting dogs and —— dogs, most of them half starved, and the kitten would have made no more than a mouthful for any of them. The chances were poor. I had never realised until now how much the little fellows had got in under my skin. The lost waif was my own particular chum, and I was going to miss him. Yet I could not believe but what he had somehow made the grade and got to the lake, distant though it was. They had blundered complacently through a number of tough situations from the time of their birth on, and—there—sure enough, across a narrow bay I saw a dark brown object on the shore line, dimly seen in the rapidly falling dusk—just in time! I gave several loud calls and instantly, not from the direction of this brown object at all, but from a spot not a stone's throw ahead of me, came an answer, a most dolorous wailing. The willows were very thick and I could see nothing, but I advanced, calling every few steps and getting an answer each time, until with eyes bulging and hair erect, the wanderer burst through the leaves and threw himself at my feet. I picked up the little furry body and held him close to my shirt, while he uttered barely audible whimpering sounds and burrowed his nose into my neck. He was bone dry, so that

although he must have been on the point of entering the water, he had allowed himself to be called away from it by the sound of a voice that he knew. Never before, and only once since, have I had the same feeling of relief at the recovery of anything lost.

Anahareo, of course, was overjoyed. And now the so-big box had its small quota of inhabitants, and from it there arose sounds of strife as the reunited couple quarrelled lustily over some sweet biscuits we had bought to celebrate the occasion. And as I watched them disporting themselves in happy unconsciousness of any danger past, present or future, I found it strange and a little disquieting that these animals, that had seemed heretofore to have only one use, and that I had destroyed by hundreds, should turn out to be so likeable, should so arouse the protective instinct of a man who was their natural enemy.

From a purely economic view-point I had long been opposed to the wholesale slaughter now going forward, which was indeed almost at an end for want of victims. But this was different. These beasts had feelings and could express them very well; they could talk, they had affection, they knew what it was to be happy, to be lonely—why, they were little people! And they must be all like that. All this tallied with the incredible stories I had heard in younger days, and perhaps accounted for the veneration that our people, when savage, had held them in, calling them "Beaver People," "Little Indians" and "Talking Mothers." Indian mothers, bereaved of an infant, had suckled baby beavers at their breasts and thus gained some solace. I had seen them myself cared for tenderly by those whose hands they had fallen into. And I would have left them to die with never a thought, an intention that seemed now to have been something nearly barbarous. Well, we had to live, and anyway they were all

right. To make sure I looked inside the box, and carefully securing the lid, went to bed.

That night they gnawed their way out of their new domicile and, weary with this, and that, and one thing and another, were found the next morning fast asleep alongside of it.

Having again missed our train, with the freakish irresponsibility common to our kind when not seriously employed, we decided to miss a few more and stay for the week-end. The news concerning our menagerie had spread, and we were approached by a fur dealer who wanted to see what we had. There were, he said, a pair of other young beaver that an Indian had turned into a storekeeper in part payment of his debt, and he himself had intended to buy them. They were not, he said, in good shape and might die, and he would not touch them unless shipped to him at the present owner's risk. He was much taken with ours, as they were in first-class condition, and he made us a good offer. This, of course, we did not accept; although we were getting short of money we had no notion of parting with them.

But we did go to see the other kittens, first putting our own under a heavily weighted galvanised wash-tub, and setting a guard over them with orders to show them to nobody. The place we were going to was a combined general store and hotel, but its principal source of revenue was the sale of contraband liquor. This bootlegger was not a bad fellow at heart, and he gave away as much whisky as he ever sold. He was a very devout man too, and had in his private chamber a kind of altar with a candle burning continuously before it. Here he was in the habit of holding family worship, and it was no uncommon thing for him to rise from his knees and repair behind his grocery counter, sell a bottle of liquor to a customer, and return to his devotions, being careful to bless himself before entering the sacred chamber. These people,

who had bought the new kittens, had no idea of how to look after them, and the little creatures were in utter misery. They were plainly in a dying condition, crying weakly without ceasing. When we reached inside the box they clutched our fingers in their tiny hands with pitiful cries of distress, as though begging the best they knew how for somebody, anybody, to take away this great trouble that had fallen upon them, to keep them from the black abyss into which they were sinking.

I could pity, but not condemn. I had not the right; at the old beaver house I had nearly done this very thing myself.

" If only they would let us have them," whispered Anahareo, " just to die in the box with ours beside them, so they wouldn't be lonely."

" We'll buy them." I turned to the store-keeper. " How much do you want for them ? "

" Plenty," he countered. " How much you got ? "

I told him. " Not enough," he said. He had to live too.

Anahareo offered to care for them, suggesting shrewdly that they would be worth more if they recovered. This overture also was refused. The merchant had sent for a licence to enable him to ship them to the dealer we had met, and would, he stated, be satisfied if the beavers lived until the deal was settled, and they safely on their way. If they then succumbed it would be, he considered, a good joke on the buyer. This, I might add, was a fair example of the ethics of more than a few of the bucket-shop fur buyers that the late boom in prices had produced.

But the kittens did not live, fortunately perhaps, and without water, proper food or care of any kind, one little prisoner was found on the Sunday morning lifeless in his cell,

and the other lay dead beside a water pail that he had crawled to for the life-giving fluid that he could not reach.

And it seemed to me like very close to desecration, when the two little wasted forms that belonged in the clean sweet freedom of the Silent Places were thrown, dead and despised, into a dirty bucket of slops.

And later, as I looked in on the two small creatures that were so dependent on me, I knew that never would I sell them into bondage, and that living or dead they should be for ever free. I thought, too, of that other brown body lying squandered and lifeless on the bottom of their home-pond with its paw, so much like a hand, clamped in one of my traps. My gesture of atonement, made half in earnest at the time, now began to have a deeper meaning. And let times be never so hard in days to come, rather than be a party to such a scene as I had just witnessed in that sordid bootleg joint, I would myself go hungry.

I think it was at that moment that I finally decided to quit the beaver hunt for good.

FRANCIS WATSON

Diary of a Revolution

YEGEN, *Andalusia; Monday, October* 8. "The poor donkeys slipping half-asleep. . . ." One of the last images in *Ulysses*, and here it's the first thing one hears in the morning. A sound so unfamiliar to English ears, or even to Irish ones, that Mrs. Bloom's mind carried it easily across time and set it down intact. A sound so completely Spanish that I'm instantly broad awake and aware that I'm in Spain. The street slopes and is very uneven, and there's a kennel running down the middle of it, so that nearly every hoof-beat stumbles into a double one, and the resultant sound at first suggests a clattering career at breakneck speed. But the ass is only shambling, slipping half-asleep, buried under a mountainous load of maize. Politically, Spain seems to curvet and snort and canter and yet to move forward at a snail's pace, for all the sparks struck from its plunging heels.

This morning there were voices too. Several women underneath the window, and now and again a man's voice calling from a little distance. *Barcelona . . . radio . . . revolución* . . . and so forth. It seems they've heard something on the wireless, so perhaps the man had ridden over from Válor. The nearest radio I know of is in the inn there, and I wouldn't

care to rely on the sounds that come out of it. If there is really " trouble " in Barcelona, I suppose friends in England will get anxious about us. Funny to think of C. and J. reading the *Daily Telegraph* and giving both of us up for lost. On this slope of the Sierra Nevada we know of nothing ultramontane since the days of Larwood and the Brighton Trunk Murder.

The fig-trees are showing patches of brown among their leaves, and down in the ravine the poplars blow gold instead of silver. Even here autumn must do something to assert itself. It gets chilly after dusk, but as tropical as ever under the sun. Grubbing for the bulbs of an African lily that I discovered on the hills at sunset (appropriately enough, I believe it's a *Watsonia*), I found the earth warm through and through as deep as I went.

Butterfield did three good drawings to-day—one lovely group of children with a line by Picasso out of Gaudier. It makes me jealous. I did nothing but prune a couple of chapters with an uncertain hand. The more I write the less I have to show for it. Like trying to skate in a dream with evil things in pursuit.

Tuesday, October 9. Tethered all day with proofs, and likely to be so for another day or two. They were sent here by air mail, and took two days longer than by normal post. That may be an indication of a disturbance somewhere, but we've heard nothing more. In any case, with all the aeroplanes in the world, the last stage of the journey has to be done by mule, and mules don't know the word urgent. Nor, I think, do Spaniards.

There rode into the village this evening a ragged, smiling man who seemed perfectly equipped for life. He had one donkey, one cow, one bull-calf, one goat, one wife and one baby, and he kept all his possessions in sight. He couldn't

have carried three acres with him. Here is your archetypic individual for an agrarian communist state in Spain.

Wednesday, October 10. F. B. met the *guardia* in his vineyard this morning, and was told that by order of the *Alcalde* no fire-arms are to be used for the present. We had arranged to borrow some primitive weapons for a mixed shoot in the Sierras to-day, but now it's off. The *guardia* says there's martial law in Spain, which means no more rabbit-stew for us. What else it may mean we can't find out, but there are dark and probably exaggerated rumours.

The Brook Kerith reads well in this part of the world. We're not far off the same latitude as the cenoby, and the landscape must be very similar. The sheep and goats coming down from the hills at dusk provide an aural mirage, if there could be such a thing. The sound of their bells is indistinguishable from that of running water in a rocky basin.

" Thinkest, Paul, that those that come after thee will not pick up the Messiah where thou hast left him and carry him still further into deity ? " Here the wheel has come full circle, and Jesus is a man again. A man who can be represented in coloured wax, who is pleased when people cheer him and his Mother and discharge rockets in their honour. A man who is waiting for us in heaven with the kindliest of Spanish hospitality. Topographically the gospel is much more comprehensible to the average Andalusian than to the average Anglo-Saxon. They know here what a garden of olives is, and why feet are washed when one enters a house, and what sort of pit an ox or an ass may fall into. Knowing this, they've never felt the need to elaborate abstractions into bones of fierce contention, and even the highly-developed Spanish mysticism proceeds from a naïvely anthropomorphic conception of deity. The Inquisition itself was a monument of terrible simplicity. Refusing to adulterate religion with

philosophy, Spain will be the last European nation to divorce it from politics.

Thursday, October 11. The Milky Way is like a pillar of smoke to-night. The Spanish call it the Via de Santiago, and Pepe was unaccountably amused when the English name was translated for him. He says that Barcelona has been bombed —why or by whom does not emerge. I should probably understand it no better if I read a *Times* leader on the subject, for modern methods of political expression can be explained neither by logic nor passion.

The Moors held Granada for three hundred years after they had lost their other Spanish possessions, and it will take a revolution about as long to reach this spot.

Friday, October 12. Letter from home. Not alarmed, but wondering whether there may be difficulties in food-supply. But we're self-supporting here. Every man eats of his own vine, and drinks of his own cistern, and sits under his own fig-tree.

The nectarine and curious peach
Into my hands themselves do reach.

And above all we've no newspapers. They only reached the Garden after the Fall. The smallest village in the Pennines or the Cotswolds is more concerned about the Spanish Revolution than we. Grave News. . . . Serious Situation. . . . Our readers will learn with horror. The machinery for manufacturing, advertising and selling crises is very efficient; but we've been abandoned as a dead market.

Two old women spinning wool straight from the fleece —with bobbins, more primitive than the spinning-wheel that has been driven into the corners of refined tea-shops in the English countryside. More difficult, too.

The man at the wine-shop on the road says that 15,000 people have been killed. And he says that this year's wine

will be good, only watered down as usual. They've been pressing grapes to-day—with their feet, as romance demands. Probably it's more efficient than all the electric presses of Rheims and Bordeaux and Jerez. The Spanish word for grapes has a rich, velvety sound, heightened by the peculiar *bv* consonant. *Uvas*, exuberant, rubicund, the heavy udders of the vine. Which leads to the fancy that Rubens, with such a name, was bound to be a painter, and to be just such a painter as he was. The same, perhaps, with Vlaminck. Never mind what their fathers and sons were—we're now in the inconsequential country of idle ideas.

Saturday, October 13. We basked on a wall in the sunshine like geckos this morning, reading letters from England. Denis Johnston's play is a success, and to be taken West. . . . Sir Michael Sadler's retiring. . . . My god-daughter is to be christened next week. . . . I am to read *The Travel Diary of a Philosopher* at the first opportunity and to keep out of revolutions.

I killed three flies with one blow of the hand, which didn't approach the record of the Valiant Little Tailor, but pleased me all the same. The Government House in Barcelona, they tell me, was completely destroyed in two hours.

"You'll never guess," said Butterfield at dinner, "who's come to stay at the inn along the road."

And I couldn't. It's the troupe of strolling players whom we met at Mecina-Bombaron a fortnight ago. We went up and talked to them later—at least, to the old man and his acrobat son. The father was born in Germany. Fifty-nine years on the road, either at music-halls or at fairs. He has a notebook with the name of every place he's played at, and the dates. Merthyr, Odessa, Johannesburg, Greenock, Avignon, Florence, Manchester, Saragossa, Paris, Sesenheim . . . hundreds of them, all in the oddest order. The outbreak of

war in 1914 cancelled a contract for £40 a week that had just been arranged for him in England. Now the plate is carried round for centimos twice during each performance. Their field gets narrower day by day as the cinema advances. One day they'll all be pushed into the Mediterranean, and strolling players will become a matter for English historical novels and German *Volkswissenschaft*. He talked to us in a fluid amalgam of Spanish, French, English, German and Italian. Secure, distinguished air of a capable man who has seen most things and is contented with the small ones.

Sunday, October 14. English newspaper-cuttings arrived from Philip, and now we know. The Whole of Spain in Grip of Civil War. . . . Hundreds of Casualties. . . . Thousands arrested. . . . Barcelona Leaders Shelled into Surrender. . . . Battle for Barracks. . . . Children killed in street-fighting. . . . British Subjects Missing. . . . Shambles, anarchy, holocaust, chaos, mutiny, etc., etc., etc. And a Will Dyson cartoon of Spain putting the clock back.

But the Spanish clock has never kept very good time. Charles V found that out at Yuste, and if clocks wouldn't obey Charles they won't obey the pseudo-politicians of to-day. Still, it does seem unnecessary to smash up the works in order to put back the clock.

The cuttings, of course, are a week old. What the linotypes will be spilling out this evening is hard to conjecture, and perhaps scarcely worth the effort. Things have a way of happening on Sunday, as Fleet Street knows, and even before Fleet Street began to care about it a Sunday was found for the Massacre of St. Bartholomew.

Sitting on the roof with the sun falling deliciously on my back, I turned over a page of Yang Chu's *Garden of Pleasure* and came to the old husbandman of Sung :

" Turning one day to his wife, he said : People do not know

how pleasant a thing it is to have warm sunshine on the back. I shall communicate this to our prince, and I am sure to get a rich present."

That was written twenty-two centuries ago, and twenty-two centuries hence, granted the continued existence of sun and man, it may be written again. But Senor Lerroux's back will not be warm then, nor General Batet's, nor that of Our Special Correspondent.

I can hear the roll of a drum at the corner of the street. The drum stops, and now somebody's making a proclamation :

"At half-past seven this evening, by the Will of the People . . ."

Another roll of the drum and a clash of cymbals.

So it has come at last !

At half-past seven promptly we shall be in the open space beside the church to watch the strolling players.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FRANCIS WATSON, the author of delightful *Trinc*, has been living in a little village in Spain that seems from his description to be stuck in some crevice of a Spanish mountain where regularly the sun, but only occasionally news, seeps in. Down in the valleys and on the plains where the industrial cities lie, the Spanish Revolution has been dragging out its interminable course, but only the faintest echoes of the strife have reached the ears of our young novelist, who describes himself at this writing, " sitting on a roof with the sun falling deliciously on my back." *Diary of a Revolution*, which we publish in this number, is a mellow compound of sun-warmed thoughts, with that ironic sub-tinge that not even the sun can quite eradicate from the Anglo-Saxon mind.

VERA BRITTAIN'S *Testament of Youth* (Gollancz) can be placed amongst the three most important autobiographies in English that have come out of the war. [I should name the other two *Memoirs of an Infantry Officer* and *Good-bye to All That*.] The book is unique in that it describes the experiences of a woman, and indirectly of all women, of her particular and unfortunate generation. Her contribution to the *Amiable Confessions* series is important, because it outlines again her experiences, and tells how *Testament of Youth* came to be written.

Three of our contributors this month need no introduction other than their names: HENRY WILLIAMSON, who will be remembered past this generation for his delightful nature books; HUMBERT WOLFE, poet, critic and author with a gift for biting satire; and H. E. BATES, an old and valued contributor whose novel *The Poacher* (Cape) is attracting so much attention at the moment.

RALPH JAMESON is a newcomer to these pages, as is KARL WICKERHAUSER, who tells us that *Revolution in Goyaz* is the first story he has written in English. Language is no barrier to one who can evoke so magically the sleepy atmosphere of a South American town, the quick irritability of its inhabitants, and the opera-bouffe nature of everything that happens in that sleepy but smouldering world.

L. D.